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PLAY



ISSUE NO 251
YOU DEFEATED

A PS4 EXCLUSIVE TO DIE FOR

BLOODBORNE

2015
EVERYTHING YOU
NEED TO PLAY

- PS4'S MOST IMPORTANT GAME
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**SURVIVING THE APOCALYPSE
ON PLAYSTATION 4**

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on why players love the end of days

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WHO WINS?**

Ubisoft's killer duo go hood to
hood as Unity takes on Rogue

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THE MONSTER**

In-depth Evolve alpha breakdown
and exclusive video analysis

ALSO INSIDE

CALL OF DUTY: ADVANCED WARFARE • FREEDOM WARS • DRAGON AGE INQUISITION
LITTLEBIGPLANET 3 • FAR CRY 4 • RAINBOW SIX: SIEGE • GUILTY GEAR XRD -SIGN-
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ISSUE 251

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8 VICTORY
ACHIEVED

Inside Bloodborne,
the most important
game on PS4

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PRAISE THE SUN!



AS WE COME to the end of PS4's first full year, there's a hell of a lot of great stuff to look back on. The post-launch lull wasn't nearly as bad as many feared, Snake, Lara and

Delsin rocking up early in the year to kick things off with a bang. And while there have been loads of disappointing delays, it's been a storming year even without all the absentees – *The Last Of Us* and *GTA V* get to fight over who gets Game Of The Year for the second year running, backed up by the best football clash we've seen in years and with killer triple-A games like *Diablo III*, *Alien Isolation*, *Destiny*, *Advanced Warfare* and *Shadow Of Mordor* joined by indie essentials from *Minecraft* to *Spelunky*. Not a bad first year, eh?

But the next is already looking to put it to shame. Within 2015's first few months, you've got the likes of *The Witcher 3*, *The Order: 1886*, *Project Cars*, *Battlefield Hardline*, *Evolve* and or course the spectacular *Bloodborne* to look forward to, and that's before it all goes crazy later in the year with heavy-hitters like *The Phantom Pain*, *Arkham Knight* and *Uncharted 4* lining up to knock your proverbial socks off. This issue, we've gone a little deeper into pretty much every known major release of 2015 to really show you what's in store in PS4's bright future.

As excited as I am for this avalanche of exciting games, though, there's a bit of a problem. Yes, it's *Destiny*. Despite its issues, I still can't tear myself away from it and with the first expansion giving me a whole new Raid to learn and a bunch of new loot to probably never get, that's me set for a while. My backlog is still an embarrassment, and I need to fix it. Hopefully, by the next time you're looking at this page, I'll have actually finished with *Alien Isolation*, *Wolfenstein*, *Shadow Of Mordor* et al. I won't, obviously (because *Destiny*), but it's good to dream big, right?

Enjoy the issue, and I'll see ya online.

LUKE ALBIGÉS
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CURRENTLY PLAYING
Destiny (PS4)

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2015 SHOWCASE

Bloodborne leads a killer PlayStation 4 line-up

PLAY Contents

Souls? Where we're going, we don't need Souls...

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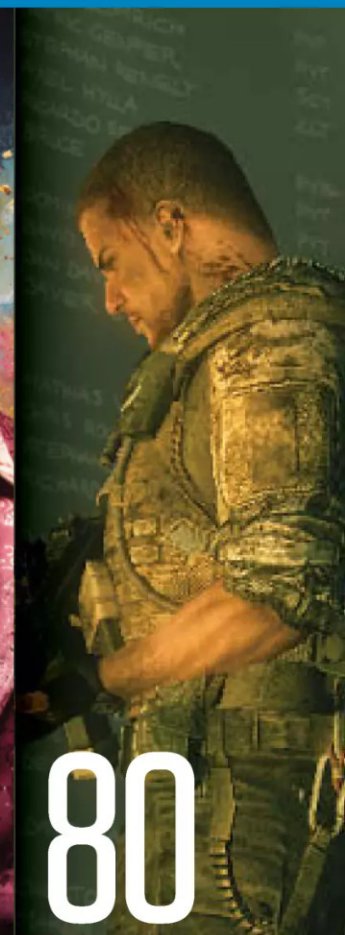
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WHAT'S YOUR
NEXT MOVE?



DYNASTY WARRIORS 8 Empires

30 JANUARY 2015



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2015 SHOWCASE

It's not been a bad year for games, but 2015 is looking like it could be one for the history books. Feast your eyes on the incredible gaming experiences heading to PS4 in the coming months...







PREPARE TO DIE BLOODBORNE

It wouldn't be all that tough to argue that the PS4 is still yet to see its first true killer triple-A exclusive. *Driveclub*, while mechanically competent, proved to be too little too late, while *inFamous* and *Killzone* showcased the new hardware in a stunning way without offering anything original in terms of gameplay. Indies have been absolutely on point so far, though, and now it's time for the big teams to start catching up. In fact, it's already happening. Teaming up with *Demon's Souls* and *Dark Souls* developer From Software was a masterstroke on Sony's part, meaning the spiritual successor to the *Souls* lineage is only playable on PS4. While new IPs and legacy PlayStation franchises might not convince people to switch sides or buy into a new generation, a game that picks up where a generation-defining series left off probably will. Ladies and gentlemen, we give you *Bloodborne*, the most difficult, most impressive and most important game on PlayStation 4 so far.



△×□ The Gaping Dragon has nothing on this eyeball-covered thing. Creature design at its most grotesque.



From Software isn't exactly new to the action-RPG genre, with the *King's Field* series a staggering two decades old this year. *Demon's Souls* borrowed and refined much from its punishing and rather janky forerunner, just as *Bloodborne* now establishes a new rule set clearly inspired by all things *Souls* and packs production values above and beyond anything the studio has done to date. When originally leaked as *Project Beast*, fans were quick to point out the many *Souls* similarities – from

creature design and the grim tone to fog gates and animations – and many in fact thought it would be *Demon's Souls 2*. Having put a fair few hours into the game now, the assumption that it was once going to be a *Souls* game isn't an unfair one, although it is apparently inaccurate. Director Hidetaka Miyazaki, creator of the *Souls* series, tells us how it went down.

"I knew it was not going to be a *Souls* game right from the beginning," he reveals.





△×□ Hardcore players will be glad to hear that you can still sheathe gear in order to go into battle barehanded.

“THE IDEA OF EASY MODE TO APPEAL TO MORE USERS IS SOMETHING I FEEL IS NOT RIGHT FOR THIS GAME”

“Initial conversations with Sony were based on creating a brand new game on new hardware regardless of *Demon's Souls*.” From a commercial standpoint, it makes sense – *Dark Souls* has been incredibly popular across three formats and it'd be lunacy to divide that audience and still expect results. *Souls* games don't exactly do *Call Of Duty* numbers – it's very much a gamer's game and between presenting an incredible difficulty barrier and intentionally limiting assistance and explanation, it could never have the universal appeal of today's biggest games.

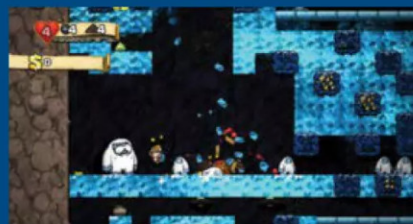
Despite numerous changes to the *Souls* format for *Bloodborne*, many hallmarks still exist and when even the controls are almost identical, it's easy to see why people are getting a *Souls* vibe from *Bloodborne*, but it's a

totally new beast. Platinum did the same thing with *Bayonetta* (key team members were previously responsible for *Devil May Cry*), and that worked out alright, as we recall. Long story short: It's not a *Souls* game. “We have never treated it as a sequel of any kind,” Miyazaki reiterates (interestingly, he refused to comment when asked about *Demon's Souls* references found in the Alpha – seems these are simply knowing nods to fans rather than any kind of direct continuity), but the game itself is shaping up all the better for it.

“What is different about *Bloodborne* is the world that its set in, and the fact that it's a more combat-focused game,” Miyazaki explains. “Some of the things that stand out for me personally are the use of transforming weapons and firearms, which could not be

NO EXPERIENCE NECESSARY

While it might look and play a lot like a *Souls* game, newcomers needn't let that stand between them and a good and/or bad time (depending on how you look at it). Yes, you will probably die a lot, but as long as you're willing to accept responsibility for your shortcomings and learn from them, *Bloodborne* will still be an incredible experience. Here are a few reference points for those who aren't au fait with the *Souls* universe...



SPELUNKY

It might *feel* unfair, dying over and over, but it seldom is. Attacks and hazards are telegraphed and obvious when you know what to look out for, placing the onus on you to be aware of both surroundings and company.



DESTINY

You will fall time and again in the Vault Of Glass until you master each phase. The same is true of *Bloodborne*'s enemies. You can only play the 'It took me by surprise!' card once – after that, it's all on you to learn and adapt.



DEVIL MAY CRY

Sure, *Bloodborne* might not be as technical as Capcom's devilishly good franchise but the new action-heavy combat will feel familiar to players of *DMC*, *Revengeance*, *Bayonetta* or any other game from this skill-based genre.



GRAND THEFT AUTO V

A huge world to explore full of terrible people and horrible things to do. Sound familiar? As much as Yharnam might be a far cry from Rockstar's tongue-in-cheek take on LA, its population is every bit as cruel.

WHAT DOES THE DELAY MEAN?

We don't want another Driveclub on our hands...



Originally slated for an early February release, *Bloodborne* recently slipped to the end of March. Reason to be worried? Far from it. Alpha feedback was largely positive, and it's just the technical issues that were highlighted by this semi-public showing that have led to a little more time in the lab – elements to be tweaked and screws to be tightened so the experience lives up to its full potential. It doesn't sound as though Miyazaki's crew would have been able to fully deliver on the promise of the game if it weren't for this additional development time. "There definitely is pressure but I try not to think about it too much," Miyazaki explains. "The dev team, myself included, is not great with pressure."

introduced in a fantasy setting such as *Demon's Souls*." A fair point, really – we loathe cheap casters in *Dark Souls* enough as it is without having to worry about campers and snipers as well.

Not that *Bloodborne*'s guns really function as FPS fans might expect them to anyway, to be honest – rather than primary tools, they're merely limited-use backup plans, a way of interrupting enemy attacks with a well-timed shot just as you might use a parry in *Dark Souls*. Dual-form weapons are cool as well, especially when you start working out how best to switch between stances mid-combo. Better yet, the gear available in the Alpha looks to be just the start. The most recent reveal is a cane-esque sword that can be extended into a bladed whip akin to Ivy's weapon in *SoulCalibur* (AKA The Best Weapon In Anything Ever) or *Dark Souls II*'s Puzzling Sword,

suggesting that there'll be a crazy amount of variety in terms of weapon choice come the full game.

One of the big questions about *Bloodborne* is that of structure. *Dark Souls* and its sequel offered large, interconnected worlds to explore, while *Demon's Souls* had a hub-based and more old-school format. Miyazaki is happy to offer some insight here although typically, he doesn't give too much away. "It's almost a hybrid of the two games," he tells us. "The city of Yharnam is seamlessly intertwined and connected, much like the world in *Dark Souls*. But there is also a definite hub area, which also makes it like *Demon's Souls*." There are two ways to read into this – either Yharnam has a central zone not unlike Firelink Shrine or Majula in the *Dark Souls* games



△×□ The hatchet proved to be the most versatile weapon we got to try, offering balanced speed and power.

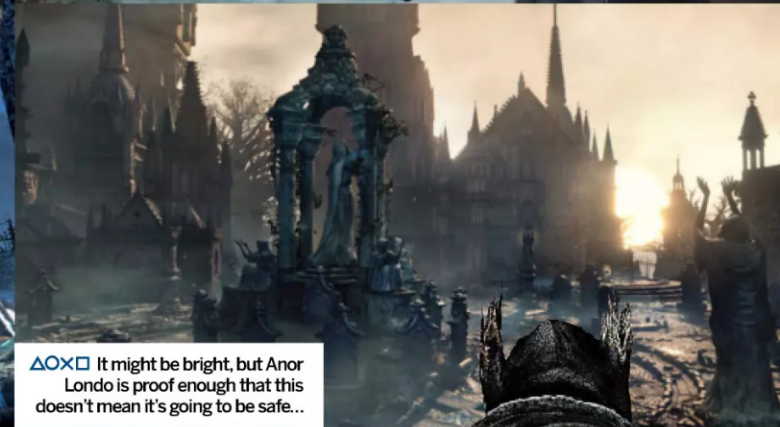


DEFINE A GENERATION • THE GAMES THAT WILL DEFINE A GENERATION • THE GAMES THAT WILL DEFINE A GENERATION

2015 SHOWCASE



"THE CITY OF YHARNAM IS
INTERTWINED, MUCH LIKE THE
WORLD IN DARK SOULS"



△×□ It might be bright, but Anor Londo is proof enough that this doesn't mean it's going to be safe...

(albeit one more central, given the need to reference *Demon's Souls*) or the Yharnam we've seen so far could just be one of the areas accessible from the hub Miyazaki mentions. Recent screens show areas that look nothing like what we've seen or played so far, and it could be that a town centre hub leads to more places than the one announced so far. Mystery and discovery are a huge part of the *Souls* experience, so we've never been happier to hear an ambiguous answer to a question in all our years of conducting interviews.

That being said, sometimes you want definite answers. And Miyazaki has them where it counts. "There will not be an Easy mode," he states, as the

entire *Souls* community punches the air in unison. "My approach is coming up with a challenging difficulty that everyone is able to conquer, and it still remains so for *Bloodborne*. I personally am not a skilful gamer, nor am I rejecting Easy mode in games. But the idea of Easy mode to appeal to more users is something I feel is not right for this game." The entire allure of the *Souls* games is having to overcome hardship and learn your way to victory, so we're glad to hear *Bloodborne* won't be dumbed down at all in search of a few more sales. "*Demon's Souls* is said to be an essential hardcore RPG experience but I think that's open to debate," Miyazaki laughs. "Perhaps people will have a different view of *Bloodborne*, but who knows? We'll have to wait and see."



THE DEVIL'S IN THE DETAIL

Forget Dark Souls' ropey graphics – Bloodborne is the real deal

SUITED AND BOOTED

The excitement of finding a cool new costume is heightened when everything looks this good. Not unlike *Monster Hunter*, the best gear will offer bonus abilities.

TRIAL BY STONE

The stunning gothic world can be even more imposing than any boss. When it comes to places you'd never want to go, From Software is the master.

TOOLS OF THE TRADE

The *Souls* series has seen some neat weapons but here, From has the power to take things to the extreme. Transforming weapons look great and handle amazingly.

UGLY AS SIN

From Software's creature design has been exceptional since *Demon's Souls*, but only now can it really shine through thanks to the enhanced power of PS4.

THERE WILL BE BLOOD

Viscera spews forth as you scythe through Yharnam's horrible inhabitants, but it doesn't just disappear. After a long fight, your hunter will be coated in claret.

WHAT YOU'LL BE DOING IN UNCHARTED 4

PUB Sony DEV Naughty Dog ETA Q4 2015



△○×□ Those tech wizards at Naughty Dog are putting together a game that truly shows off the PS4.

BACK IN ISSUE 246, we picked out some clues based on the *Uncharted 4* trailers and made some educated guesses about the adventure that you'll find yourself on, and what we've seen since only corroborates with what we suggested...

Given that the original *Uncharted 4* teaser trailer revealed a map on which an island off the coast of Madagascar has been circled, we surmised that this is one of the locations that we'll be visiting in the game. That island, Île Sainte-Marie, was used as a base of operations by Olivier Levasseur, a pirate that was hanged in 1730, but not before he'd pulled off an epic heist worth hundreds of millions of dollars in today's money. Treasure hunters are still searching for his unrecovered booty today.

Now, the interesting thing is that a large part of the area where said treasure hunters are searching for Levasseur's haul has now been submerged. Enter the *Uncharted 4* concept art that appeared in Naughty Dog's recently released art book. The art shows images of Drake pottering around a semi-submerged town on a jet-ski and some pictures of buildings that are entirely underwater. That fits perfectly with our theory that you'll be searching for Levasseur's treasure when *Uncharted 4* releases for PS4.





THE ORDER: 1886

PUB Sony
DEV Ready At Dawn
ETA 20 February

IT'S NOT THE only game that looks set to stagger us with its visual prowess in 2015, but this PS4 exclusive is staking a claim to be leading the pack when it comes to dropping jaws. *The Order's* stunningly rendered world is a mix of fantastical elements and pseudo-Victorian technology, with semi-immortal knights and monstrous lycanthropes placed alongside electronic arc guns and thermite rifles.

The knights of the titular Order, Mallory, Grayson, Lafayette and Isabeau have advanced healing abilities and an extended lifespan thanks to a magical liquid called Black Water. Early on in the game, these knights will find themselves protecting lords and ladies from a working-class uprising as well as having to deal with the half-breeds with which humanity has been engaged in conflict for centuries.

We don't much like the idea of gunning down the poor while protecting toffs, but we'll have to see how the game's story progresses. Perhaps we'll ultimately find ourselves with the choice of who to pledge allegiance to come the revolution?

ΔOX□ We're not sure what this thing is or what it does, but we do know that we want one...

THE WITCHER 3: WILD HUNT

A HUNTER'S GUIDE

HUNTING DOWN AND slaying dangerous monsters is just what Witchers do. Here's how one of the coolest elements of the *Wild Hunt* can play out...

PUB Bandai Namco DEV CD Projekt Red ETA 24 February

STARTING THE HUNT

Unless you're unfortunate enough to stumble across a horrible beast while strolling through the forest, you can find clues about an animal's location by talking to villagers being terrorised by it, or even by discovering one of its kills.

PREPARING

While *The Witcher 3*'s combat is being revamped, preparation is likely to remain a key factor. You'll want to whip yourself up some buffing potions ready for the fight, and perhaps even think about readying a long-range weapon.

TRACKING

You can use Geralt's heightened Witcher sense to aid you as you start tracking the beast, highlighting visual and aural clues that help you to follow a monster's trail.

THE PURSUIT

Depending on the monster, finding it won't necessarily be the end of tracking it. The Griffin, for example, may fly off once it spots you. In those instances, you might want to get a tracking bolt ready – this will leave a trail of blood you can follow.

THE BATTLE

Eventually, your prey is going to have to engage you in combat. We expect many of the monsters roaming *The Witcher 3*'s world to present a tough challenge, but we're sure you've got the skills to get the job done.

THE REWARD

We expect to be rewarded with XP and maybe unique items for crafting, but it's likely that many of your hunts will be rewarded by others, too. Perhaps some grateful villagers, or a pompous lord who wants a beast's head as a trophy.



ΔOX□ That thing would make for a kick-ass Hallowe'en costume.



MAD MAX

PUB Warner Bros
DEV Avalanche Studio
ETA Q4 2015

WE DON'T REALLY have that much detail on *Mad Max* at this stage. What we can say is that it looks like an open-world game with a few twists that could make it unique. While we've seen Max packing a hefty double-barreled shotgun in *Mad Max* trailers, the suggestion is that combat will be primarily melee focused. That makes sense in a post-apocalyptic world in which ammo would be scarce. Fitting in with that theme, the game will feature a crafting system that will allow you to make weapons and tools with items that you scavenge from the world. The primary difference with *Mad Max*, though, is that rather than stealing, driving and then discarding whatever car we fancy – as we're used to in open-world games – Max has got his own trademark vehicle. As such, you'll be working to upgrade your vehicle to make it more lethal when engaging in the vehicular combat that will presumably be a significant part of the game.



WILD

PUB Sony
DEV Wild Sheep
ETA Q4 2015

WE'RE NOT ENTIRELY sure what *Wild* is, but we know that we want to play it. *Rayman* creator Michel Ancel, the man heading up development, says that *Wild*'s world is the size of Europe – pretty impressive. As to what you'll actually be doing in it... well, that's the bit we're confused about. Best we can tell, it's some kind of survival game. The interesting thing is that you're able to play as any creature you like – human, wolf, horse, sheep, trout, or whatever else you fancy. Given that you usually expect resource collection and crafting to be a key part of survival games, though, perhaps we've got it wrong (trout don't have hands and you kind of need them to craft tools). There's much still to discover about *Wild* then – what your objectives are, whether the game features permadeath, how the game's online element will factor in and so on. Regardless, we're beguiled by the game's visual style and intrigued by the mystery of what the game actually is. Roll on 2015.



SILENT HILLS

PUB Konami
DEV Kojima Productions
ETA Q4 2015

AS A SERIES that had a strong connection to PlayStation in its early days, it's great to see *Silent Hill* coming back to PS4 and getting the shake-up that it needs. With Hideo Kojima and Guillermo Del Toro taking the helm, *Silent Hills* is in good hands. How do we know that? Because *P.T.* exists. That disturbingly excellent demo proves that Kojima and Del Toro know exactly how to terrify and that they can do it with the kind of psychological horror that made the best games of the *Silent Hill* series such absorbing, chilling experiences. We're expecting a full assault on our senses; un-nerving sound design, horrific images, and tentatively intriguing locations (because who knows what's *really* behind that door...). It will be fascinating to see to what extent *P.T.* represents what we're going to get with *Silent Hills* in 2015. We're ready to be terrified.



FINAL FANTASY XV

PUB Square Enix
DEV In-house
ETA Q4 2015

THIS GAME IS just looking better and better. *Final Fantasy XV*'s latest official trailer looked great, but what's more intriguing is the gameplay that we've seen since, coming out of Paris Games Week. Seeing protagonist Noctis cutting about in *FFXV*'s open-world, we get the sense that the game's world is absolutely colossal – as are some of the creatures populating it, incidentally. Yeah, we're talking massive monsters. Excellent news. As well as being large in scale, though, there's also a fastidious attention to detail, meaning that this should be a game that's beautiful, as well as being big. Even within the limited amount we've seen, there are some jaw-dropping scenes, with the wonderful lighting that the Luminous engine facilitates catching the eye in particular. Honestly, we can't wait to get our hands on this one.



BATMAN: ARKHAM KNIGHT

WHO IS THE ARKHAM KNIGHT?

PUB Warner Bros DEV Rocksteady ETA 2 June

The most intriguing mystery when it comes to Rocksteady's next *Batman* game is the identity of the Arkham Knight. He's being set up as the ultimate nemesis, matching Batman in combat, but WHO IS THIS GUY?



HUSH – ODDS: 3/1

Having already shown up in *Arkham City* before escaping Batman's clutches, Hush seems certain to at least make an appearance in the next game. Hush is obsessed with our hero, as evidenced by the fact that he's been murdering people while wearing a Bruce Wayne Mask.



VINCE MCMAHON – 316/1

"IT'S ME, BATMAN! IT WAS ME ALL ALONG, BATMAN!"



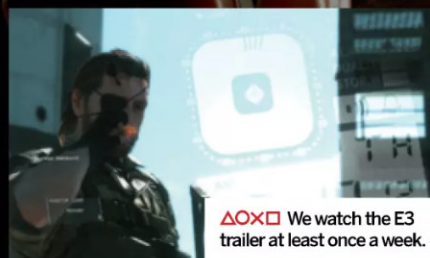
THE JOKER – 50/1

Look, we're not going to try too hard to convince you that the Arkham Knight is Joker (he died in *City*), but that's one of the most popular theories right now. To us, dressing up like the Arkham Knight doesn't seem very Joker-like, though Rocksteady could want to bring him back...



ROBIN – 10/1

There are a few ex-Robins who could be the Arkham Knight. Damien Wayne, the son of Bruce Wayne and Talia al Ghul could have been trained by the League of Assassins and set upon the father he never knew. Alternately, the Knight could be Jason Todd seeking revenge.



FOUR GAMES TO PREPARE YOU FOR

METAL GEAR SOLID V

THE PHANTOM PAIN

PUB Konami DEV Kojima Productions ETA Q4 2015

METAL GEAR SOLID: PEACE WALKER

When it comes to trying to wrap your head around the crazy convoluted narrative of the *MGS* games, you want to make things as easy for yourself as possible. One way of doing that is by playing *Peace Walker*. Starring *TPP* protagonist Big Boss, *Peace Walker* will provide you with context.

METAL GEAR ONLINE

Given that *The Phantom Pain*'s going to have multiplayer, you'll want to brush up on your PvP skills. Granted, going back to *Metal Gear Online* is a pain in the arse now that the game's official servers have been taken down, but there are still fan-run servers out there.

METAL GEAR SOLID: GROUND ZEROES

The prequel to *The Phantom Pain*, Kojima has explicitly said that this game is intended to function as an introduction to the mechanics of *MGSV*. He's also said that those who have finished *Ground Zeroes* will be rewarded in some fashion when they move on to *The Phantom Pain*.

SKYRIM

MGS is going open-world, so why not prepare yourself for an abundance of choice with the excellent *Skyrim*. Whack it into third-person, make sure you're playing as a stealth-based Rogue character and there you go, you're basically playing *MGSV*. Well, sort of...

THE GAMES WE GUARANTEE FOR 2015

Just as we know that the sun will rise, there are certain games that you just know are coming next year, despite the lack of an official announcement



FIFA 16

Naturally, just as every year brings with it a new season of football, it will bring with it a new instance of football juggernaut *FIFA*.



PES 2016

The scrappy underdog may always struggle to compete with *FIFA* when it comes to sales, but it certainly can when it comes to quality.



CALL OF DUTY

Activision has Infinity Ward, Sledgehammer and Treyarch working on *COD* in three-year cycles, with one game a year. 2015 will be Treyarch's turn.



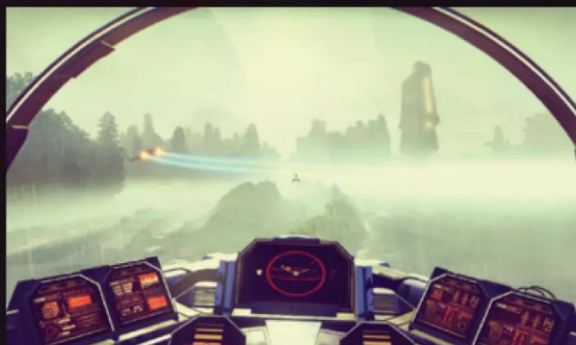
ASSASSIN'S CREED

You just know that Ubisoft's going to announce another *Assassin's Creed* game. This year, they even managed two! But where will it be set?

NO MAN'S SKY BY THE NUMBERS

PUB Hello Games DEV In-house ETA Q3 2015

2015 SHOWCASE



ΔOXΔ And to think that the studio's last game was *Joe Danger*... what?

18,446,744,073,709,551,616

↓ THE NUMBER OF PLANETS IN NO MAN'S SKY'S HUGE UNIVERSE

2.589 billion

↓ THE NUMBER OF PLANETS THERE ARE PER PERSON ON EARTH

73

PLANETS WOULD NEED TO BE FOUND PER MINUTE, FOR LIFE, BY EVERYONE ON EARTH TO DISCOVER THEM ALL



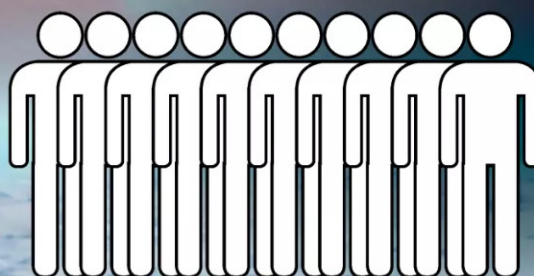
10%

OF THE PLANETS WILL HAVE LIFE



3

MAIN CLASSES OF SHIPS
FIGHTER, TRADER AND EXPLORER



10

THE STAGGERINGLY SMALL NUMBER OF PEOPLE WORKING ON NO MAN'S SKY



THE TOMORROW CHILDREN

PUB Sony DEV Q-Games ETA Q3 2015

1. PROTECT YOUR HOME

GOOD CITIZEN

3. BUILDING BRIDGES

2. AT THE COALFACE



4. TO SHARE IS TO CARE



5. BE SOCIAL

1 Your town will periodically be attacked by waves of monsters, including flying, manta-ray like animals and creatures that bear more than a passing resemblance to Godzilla. Taking them out will stand you in good stead with the community.

2 The game's got a bit of *Minecraft* about it in that collecting resources – from coal to gold – is an important part of the game. Mine resources and bring them back to the town. Crystals are particularly vital, as they used are to build structures.

3 A band of quicksand surrounds your town. You can make it easier for the workforce to get to and from the sweet, sweet resources that the town needs by building bridges and tunnels to ease their passage across the world.

4 There are a number of ways that you can help each other out – lighting up a darkened tunnel for fellow miners with a torch is just one example. However, it's also possible to directly share tools by placing them on the ground for others to pick up.

5 If your fellow citizens think you're making a positive contribution to the world, they can upvote you, giving you rations that allow you to buy more tools and equipment. Make sure you respond in kind – it all helps the collective, after all.

2015 SHOWCASE

TOM CLANCY'S THE DIVISION

PUB Ubisoft
DEV Ubisoft Massive
ETA Q4 2015

THE DIVISION IS going to be a bit like *Destiny*. Not that we're suggesting that it'll play the same in any way. Rather, the similarity lies in the fact that it's an online game that's going to be best when played with friends and one that mixes co-op with PvP.

The social element of *The Division* has been made clear in the game's trailers, where we see a team constantly communicating and using a variety of different abilities in tandem in order to deal with each situation. A significant part of the game will

be developing your characters abilities through its RPG-like systems in order for you to tailor your character to your own playstyle. We look forward to jumping in to the technically impressive post-disaster New York being presented by *The Division*.

BATTLEFIELD HARDLINE

PUB EA
DEV Visceral Games
ETA 19 March

NOW THAT IT'S been delayed from its 2014 release slot, *Hardline* will be joining the strong lineup that's coming to PS4 in 2015. With this entry being developed by Visceral, rather than DICE, there's a sense that it's trying to do things a little differently. Aside from the obvious – the cops and

robbers setup – this is evident in the structure of the campaign, which takes on a TV-like episodic pacing. However, this is a *Battlefield* game and that means that the primary focus will be multiplayer. In issue 250, *Hardline*'s executive producer Steve Papoutsis told us that the primary reason that

Hardline was delayed into 2015 was to take the beta feedback that the studio received and act on what it learned. If that delay does indeed allow Visceral to make *Battlefield Hardline* a better multiplayer game, one that better plays into the fiction on which it is based, then it'll be worth it.

△×□ Most FPS campaigns are pretty throwaway, but *Hardline*'s take on solo play is really quite interesting.



EXCLUSIVE GAMEPLAY
WATCH NOW ON YouTube
www.youtube.com/PlayMagUK

ETA 10 FEBRUARY 2015

DEV TURTLE ROCK STUDIOS

PUB 2K GAMES

TWITTER @EVOLVEGAME

Evolve

Benny Hill: The Game



WE HAVE TO be honest; we have some concerns about *Evolve*. The fact that it was near impossible to get a game on the *Evolve* alpha is, of course, a bit

worrying in light of the problems *Driveclub* faced in the wake of its release, but there's plenty of time for developer Turtle Rock to iron out server issues. What we're really talking about is what we experienced when we actually got to play the game.

The games we played in *Evolve* seemed to follow a similar pattern. Our team would spend a lot of time running towards markers that appeared on screen, telling us that the monster had disturbed some birds, for example, and by the time we got there the monster was gone. After some more running around, we finally caught up to it and shot it for a bit before the monster ran off (it's quicker than humans). Then we were back to running around in circles, following footprints or chasing those illusive markers that told us whether the monster was close or not. We can't say that we found the chase exhilarating, nor that we were particularly satisfied when we did take down the beast.

A pervading sense of boredom isn't helped by *Evolve*'s art design, which, from what we got to see in the alpha, is a bit bland. It would seem that Turtle

Rock has tried to lighten what is a rather grey world by injecting some levity through incidental character dialogue, however their attempts at humour fall completely flat.


Should we write *Evolve* off, then? No. We suspect a large part of the problem with our *Evolve* experience is a result of barriers that made it difficult to properly grasp how the game is meant to be played and how best to use each of its character classes' special abilities in tandem. Ever played *Battlefield* with people who treat it like *Call Of Duty*? It's not that fun. Similarly, the poor experience we had may just be a case of us and our teammates not quite getting how *Evolve* is meant to be played. The limited amount of game time we got with the *Evolve* alpha, due to the fact that it was nigh impossible to get into a match, made it difficult to get a good grasp on its mechanics and classes and this wasn't helped by its half-assed attempts to introduce you to the game. To be fair, *Evolve*'s alpha did include videos that told you what each class' special abilities are, but you're not going to get the best out of a multiplayer game like this until you understand how each of the four classes work and what everyone's role is meant to be in the team. Once you do, *Evolve* may prove to be a hell of a lot more enjoyable.

On that front, we're inclined to think that *Evolve*'s classes are distinct enough to facilitate the kind of high-level play we're hoping it will. Maggie, for example, is a Trapper that's all about trying to slow down the monster so that your teammates can start dealing damage. Harpoon Mines will slow the monster's escape, while the Mobile Arena is absolutely vital, allowing you to temporarily trap the monster, giving the team a great chance to take it down. In that situation, Markov, an Assault character, can get all up in the monster's grill, engage his shield and use his Lightning Gun to deal huge damage.

We can still see potential in *Evolve*. We feel that there's something that we haven't seen yet, that, when playing as part of a team where everyone knows what to do and how to best complement each other, *Evolve* could prove to be the shooter we hoped it would be. The evidence shows that Turtle Rock knows how to make a multiplayer shooter, just look at the *Left 4 Dead* series, so we're willing to give *Evolve* another chance.

Paul Walker-Emig

If you want to hunt **EVOLVE** down, look towards Turtle Rock Studios. Check the website for more details:
evolvegame.com



ΔΟΧ Bucket is a support character with the ability to cloak his fellow hunters.

"THE MOBILE ARENA IS ABSOLUTELY VITAL, ALLOWING YOU TO TEMPORARILY TRAP THE MONSTER"

WHAT MAKES THIS GAME GREAT?



Teams are always composed of four 'hunter' character classes to ensure balance.



When you play as the monster, you're pretty much a boss that players have to take down.



Hunters have a double jump which helps you move swiftly through the levels.



Maggie's pet dog-monster can track the monster's scent and aid your teammates.



WHAT YOU'RE SAYING...



Meh. Felt very loose control wise.

@C1892J



not as fun as left 4 dead.

@rooney313



Never got a game..... lol ...pile of pants alpha

@mantagtj



I had a game as the monster. Wasn't much fun. I won't be buying it.

@ugoindownsaka



ETA 2015

DEV UBISOFT MONTREAL

PUB UBISOFT

TWITTER @RAINBOW6GAME

Rainbow Six Siege

Zero respawns, maximum pressure



GRANTED, THE PS4 isn't exactly short on shooters, but *Rainbow Six Siege* is a markedly different beast to anything else that's currently on

the console. Forget about respawns and explosive streaks – this shooter is a far more cautious affair where mistakes are brutally punished, the idea being that the game takes on a certain intensity as a result. Ubisoft is very much pushing the idea that this is a tactical team-based game, one where the decisions that you make and the way that you work in tandem with your teammates is just as important as your twitch-based shooting skills. In other words, it's more like *Counter-Strike* than *Call Of Duty* and that makes it very interesting to us indeed.

Ubisoft says that the game is based around the idea of fortification, as it's demonstrated by showing off the game's Hostage Rescue mode. The team that has the hostage will have one minute to fortify their location – that means barricading windows and placing barbed wire to hinder the attacker's progress, laying traps in a bid to take one or two of your foes

down, and placing cameras that could help you spot the other side's approach. Conversely, the other team will have one minute to try and work out how to breach those fortifications. Using drone cameras, you can fly around the building that the hostage-takers are in to try and find where they're hiding the hostages and how they are setting up their defences.

Once the game begins, that tactical team-based element really comes to the fore. You and your team have to choose how to enter the building – whether to blow down the front doors, rappel up to the second floor or go through the windows and so on. As in most other tactical shooters, constant communication seems to be key. Once you're dead, you're out of the game, so it's important that you tell each other which areas are clear, inform teammates if you spot an enemy and synchronise your approach when trying to close in on the hostage. Destructibility also plays an important part in every match. In particular, breach charges can be used by the attackers to blow open holes in walls and floors when trying to get the jump on the hostage-takers.

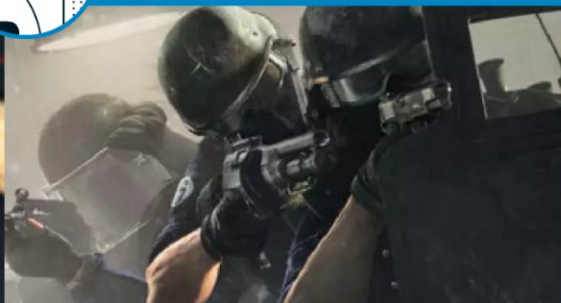
The scripted five-on-five matches that Ubisoft showed off when unveiling *Siege* gestured towards the varied, exhilarating kinds of scenarios that can emerge from the game's coalescence of mechanics, but the scripted nature of those matches naturally means that those scenarios were deliberately constructed. Fortunately, we've now seen some unscripted gameplay and it's pleasing to see that the impression Ubisoft tried to create in the game's initial reveal doesn't look too far off the mark. Watching the game being played, you get the sense that there's genuine tension in anticipation of combat, emerging from the fact that failure can come so quickly. That's followed by a rush of excitement as players start to fall, the clock counts down and each team scrambles for success. If that can translate to the act of playing the game when we get it in our hands, then *Siege* could prove to be quite special.

Rainbow Six Siege will have other game modes aside from what we've seen, of course, and we wouldn't be surprised to see some where respawns are a feature. However, it's game modes like Hostage

"THERE'S GENUINE TENSION IN ANTICIPATION OF COMBAT, EMERGING FROM THE FACT THAT FAILURE CAN COME ABOUT SO QUICKLY"



SHARE THIS



HOSTAGE SECURE

Three minutes of magic

If you have an awesome match on most multiplayer shooters, it's not really something you can get across in a short clip. One of the great things about the short matches that *Rainbow Six Siege* has, however, is that they're perfect for sharing. With matches only lasting three minutes, you can upload your most impressively efficient runs in full without worrying about boring your audience to tears.

WHAT MAKES THIS GAME GREAT?

-  You can shoot through walls and blow holes in the floor to surprise enemies.
-  You team will be built with a variety of classes, each with their own specialisation.
-  Attackers can vote on their entry point, keeping games unpredictable and fresh.
-  Game modes are built to be short and intense, taking place in tight indoor environments.

Rescue that really interest us, because it's those kinds of modes that will distinguish *Siege* from other shooters on PS4, which is presumably why Ubisoft chose this to show the game off. The same goes for the game's single-player mode. Ubisoft is aware that it's the team-based multiplayer gameplay that makes the game appealing and has therefore made the sensible decision to focus on that aspect.

It's still early days when it comes to *Rainbow Six Siege*, but we like what the game is trying to do. The whole concept of pitting two teams against each other and centring that conflict on the opposing forces of fortification and destruction is interesting in and of itself. Add to that the fact that *Siege* takes a more realistic approach to combat than most multiplayer shooters and we find ourselves optimistic about what Ubisoft is trying to do.

Paul Walker-Emig

RAINBOW SIX SIEGE is being held hostage at Ubisoft Montreal. Check the website for more details: rainbow6.ubi.com.

 The destructibility of the game's environments means scenes like this should be common.



ETA 2015 | DEV TEQUILAWORKS | PUB SONY | TWITTER @TEQUILAWORKS

Rime

A good reason to get a PS4



IT'S EASY TO see why *Rime* has drawn comparisons to PlayStation classics like *Ico* and *Shadow Of The Colossus*. It's not so much that *Rime* obviously replicates those games in terms of mechanics, it's that it has a certain spirit about it, a sense of otherworldliness that's apparent in the best of Studio Japan's output. For that reason, it feels very much like a 'PlayStation game' and is one that we're incredibly excited to play.

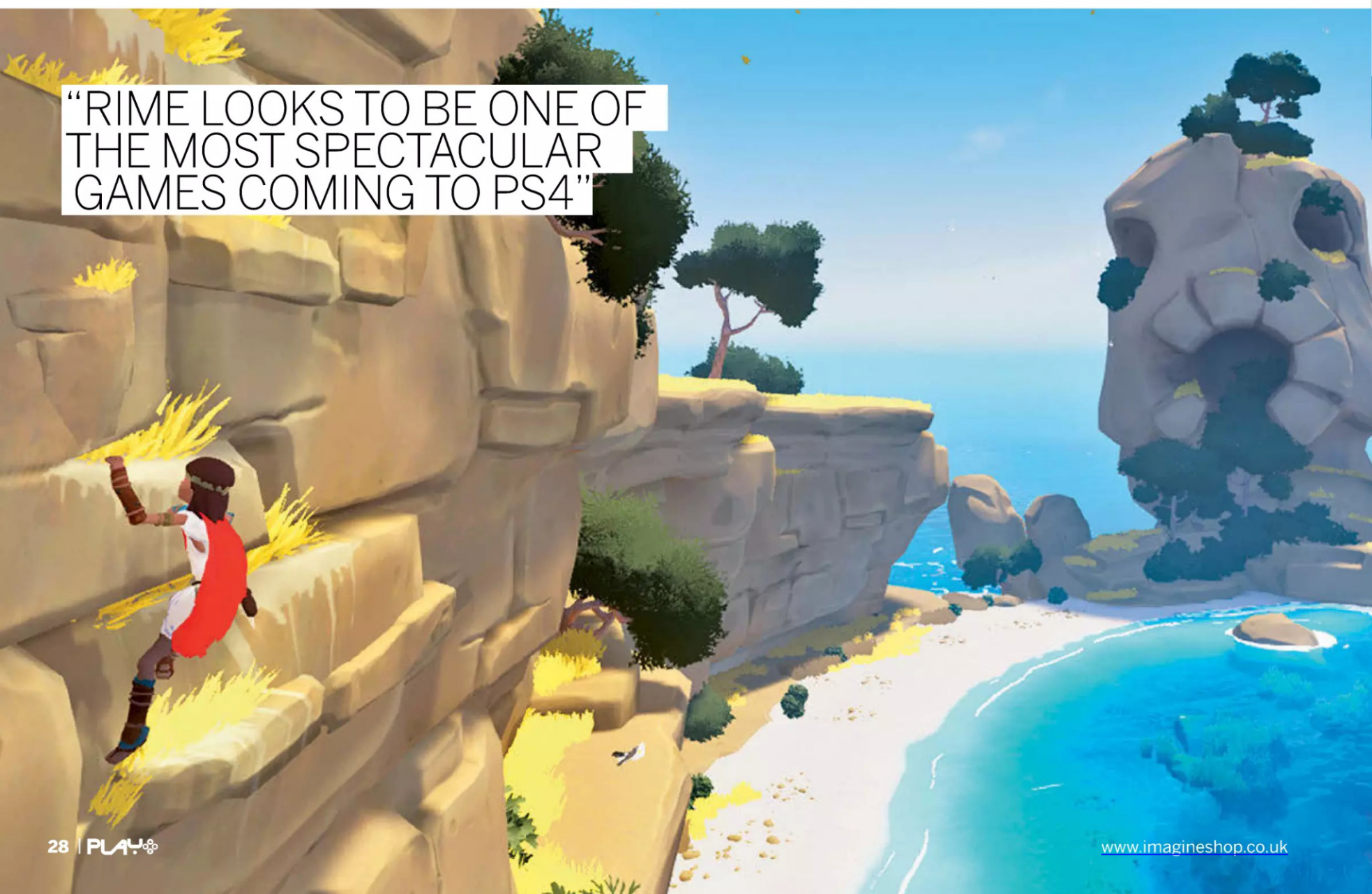
There will be no combat in *Rime*; this is a game that's about exploration and discovery. That's not to say that the game is aimless – there will be

five different islands that serve as its five levels, each representing a stage of grief. Progression throughout the game will rely on solving puzzles that you come across as you explore the island.

Just as it's up to you to explore the island itself, it will be left to you to test the parameters of *Rime*'s rule set, to play with its world and the tools you are given to see how the game responds. There's not going to be a tutorial introducing you to the mechanics, there will be no prompts telling you to press this, or move that, no objectives telling you to go here or find that. Even the act of interpreting the meaning of *Rime*'s minimalist story will be conceded



"RIME LOOKS TO BE ONE OF THE MOST SPECTACULAR GAMES COMING TO PS4"



ΔOX□ The lock-like motif at the top of this tower makes multiple appearances in the game's trailers, suggesting that it's important.

WHAT MAKES THIS GAME GREAT?



Silent Hill composer Akira Yamaoka has become a fan of the studio



Inspiration comes from Mediterranean landscapes and surrealist painters



Puzzles based on manipulating sound and the day/night cycle are very intriguing to us



The protagonist's animations will change over time to reflect the game's tonal shifts

WHAT YOU'RE SAYING...



Looks like it might be a corker

@PogleWogle



I can't wait for it. Looks a lot like *Shadow Of The Colossus* crossed with *Ico* – two of my favourite games ever!

@the_don_101



Very intrigued!

@SJHollis

to you, Tequila Works clearly being a studio that is prepared to trust the player. That makes *Rime* sound very appealing.

Of course, there is a danger that taking such a hands-off approach can leave a game feeling rudderless, overwhelming even. Hopefully, that will not be the case with *Rime*. Rather than directly telling the player what to do and where to go, Tequila Works aims to surreptitiously point you in the right direction by virtue of good design. The way the light can bring your attention to a certain area, a camera angle draw you to a landmark, the way a sound or an animal can guide you to a clue – these are the techniques the studio will be using to help you find your way through its beautiful game.

Indeed, if *Rime* is anywhere near as well crafted in terms of its subtle signposting as it is in terms of its visual splendour, then we can be sure that these techniques will work precisely as intended. Because *Rime* looks to be one of the most spectacular games coming to PS4 when it comes to its art design. Tequila Works has cited Studio Ghibli, Salvador Dalí and Joaquín Sorolla, amongst others, as inspiration for the game. You can certainly spot those influences in the warm glow of *Rime*'s sun, its

soft-edged cartoony style, but the important thing is that it looks stunning. Certainly, the game invites you to explore it if only by virtue of its beauty.

Despite the fact that *Rime* looks so inviting and has no combat, that doesn't mean that there's no sense of threat in the game. Tequila Works has talked about how they want to give you the sense of being a child and that includes feeling vulnerable. It's also said that the fact that you'll not be fighting enemies doesn't mean that there isn't any action. What exactly the studio is hinting at we can only guess. In any case, does *Rime* even need action and peril in order to interest us? Absolutely not. What we've seen of the game so far is more than enough to draw us in.

Quickly cementing itself as one of our most anticipated games of 2015, we can't wait to start scaling those towering cliffs, cannonballing into those sparkling blue waters and running through its lush, vibrant landscapes.

Paul Walker-Emig

RIME'S bright and beautiful world is being developed in the equally sunny land of Spain by Tequila Works. Check the website for more details: uk.playstation.com/rime



EXCLUSIVE GAMEPLAY
WATCH NOW ON YouTube
www.youtube.com/PlayMagUK

ETA Q1 2015

DEV ARC SYSTEM WORKS

PUB AKSYS GAMES

TWITTER @ARCSYSTEMWORKSU

Guilty Gear Xrd -SIGN-

For those about to ruck, we salute you



ALSO COMING TO PS3

FOR YEARS NOW, our kind (games writers, not human beings, although there is often a degree of crossover) have been reaching for the same line whenever games like this come along. 'It looks just like a cartoon!' is one of the games media's longest running falsehoods, because those old games? They obviously don't. Early cel-shaded PS2 games that had such praise poured over them look revolting today and even PS3's finest anime-style titles still fall some way short of the slickness of a decent animated series or movie. We've come closer in recent years to injecting some truth into this decade-old lie, sure – modern *Naruto* and *One Piece* games do their subject matter proud on PS3, just as *Ni No Kuni* was as close as we'll ever get to a playable Studio Ghibli movie. But it's no longer over-enthusiasm or hyperbole. We've reached a technological level where games really can look like cartoons, and we couldn't be happier to announce that long-MIA ArcSys fighter *Guilty Gear* is the game that can actually back up the bullshit of our forerunners. It actually *does* look like a cartoon. And in better news, it plays beautifully as well.

Arc's fighters have been using a hybrid 2D/3D model for a while now. In the case of *BlazBlue*, it's sprites mapped to 3D models for lighting purposes, while *Battle Fantasia* went with the 3D models on a 2D plane approach just weeks before *Street Fighter IV* – something we in the trade know as a 'mistake'. Believe it or not, *Guilty Gear*'s cast use the latter technique, so they're all 3D models. Such is the standard of the modelling that it's hard to spot in static shots or even general gameplay, but during match openings or victory poses, the technological magic is impossible to ignore. This makes for some of the most exciting moments, in fact; it looks so much like a top-end sprite-based fighter that when you land a Dust launcher or super attack and the camera goes wandering off from its fixed perpendicular position to pan and zoom as it sees fit, it's just mind-blowing. You forget you're dealing in three dimensions during regular play (it's an Arc fighter, so it keeps your brain busy) and these transitions can catch you off-guard. It's stunning, and stills and even video can't do its majesty justice. You have to take control of one of its bizarre fighters to truly appreciate the technological magic at work.

When you do, you'll find a game that sits somewhere between mass-market fighters like *Street Fighter* and hardcore offerings like *BlazBlue* – Arc and its peers have been carving the 2D fighter niche ever deeper, to the point where recent sprite-based games have been near impenetrable for novices looking for a quick fighting fix. It's an execution-heavy fighter and no mistake but without such major character-specific intricacies as *BlazBlue*'s Drive system presents, it's far more accessible. Most commands will be familiar to anyone who has played a 2D fighting game, but there's still a depth to the system that allows experts to string together exhibition combos and YouTube-worthy comebacks without the need for a dedicated *Ultra*-style revenge mechanic.

The Tension gauge powers almost all of your most powerful tools, from cancels to super attacks, and can even be sacrificed for one shot at glory – smack all four attack buttons at once and you'll gain access to an instant kill attack. Still, with this mode both constantly draining meter and giving your opponent a fair idea of what you're up to, it's a real risk and one made even scarier by the fact that failure to finish the fight leaves



WHAT MAKES THIS GAME GREAT?

- ▲ The most beautiful anime-style visuals ever seen in a videogame
- An awesome cast of varied characters to throw into battle against one another
- ✕ It's only the second 'proper' fighter (sorry Divekick) on PS4
- Solo content will be plentiful, as it always is in ArcSys fighters

you without your meter for the rest of the round. You *can* finish things early, but you're screwed if you don't. Your meter is better used for sick Roman Cancel combos and negating chip damage; there's a time and a place for those flashy instant kill moves.

With the *Skullgirls* devs claiming they'll enable your old PS3 arcade sticks to work on PS4, we're hoping Arc does something similar – *Injustice* might be daft enough to still work on a DualShock 4 but we're going to want sticks at the ready for this one. Which, going by Arc's prior form in Europe, could be any time between a few weeks ago and never. The US release is but days away (and PS4 is region-free, let's not forget) so the hardcore won't need to wait. We're just hoping that the European release follows soon after – we'll be on the US version day one either way, but it'd be nice to have more people to fight. Fresh meat, if you will. If you think you've got what it takes, let's rock!

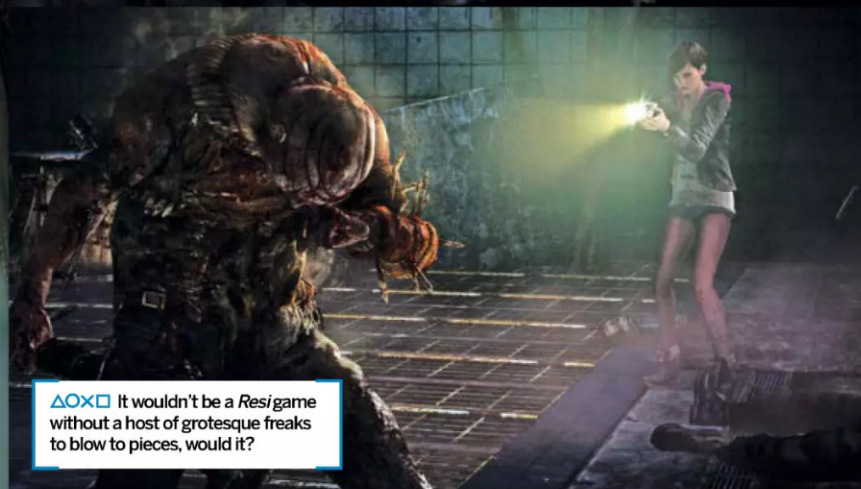
Luke Albigés

GUILTY GEAR is coming back soon and as usual, Arc System Works is in charge of the awesome fighting action. Find out more at: www.ggxrd.com

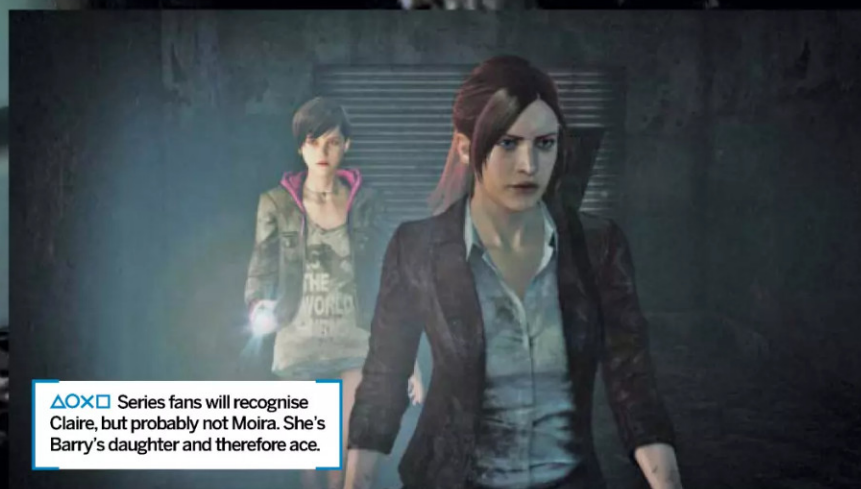
“THERE'S A TIME AND A PLACE FOR THOSE FLASHY INSTANT KILL MOVES”



"FOLLOWING A TREND SPARKED BY THE SUCCESS OF TELLTALE'S EPISODIC OUTPUT, REVELATIONS WILL BE RELEASED EPISODICALLY"



△○×□ It wouldn't be a *Resi* game without a host of grotesque freaks to blow to pieces, would it?



△○×□ Series fans will recognise Claire, but probably not Moira. She's Barry's daughter and therefore ace.

WHAT MAKES THIS GAME GREAT?



The game is experimenting with an episodic structure to get us chatting.



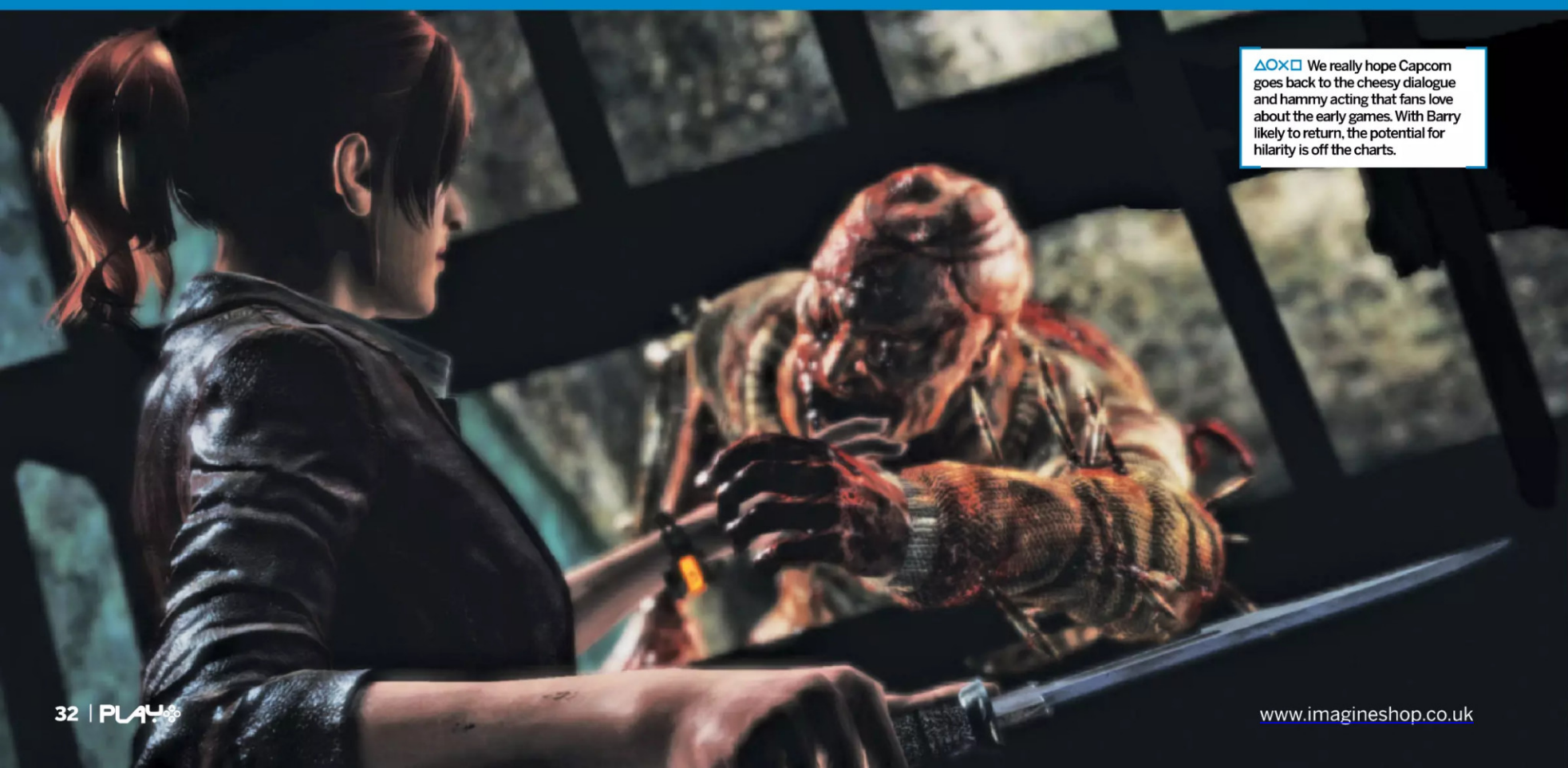
The Burtons are back! We can't wait to find out if Moira Burton was taught the Burton Boot.



Tighter environments will give the game a more claustrophobic feel.



You can take on missions with your friends in the game's Raid mode.



△○×□ We really hope Capcom goes back to the cheesy dialogue and hammy acting that fans love about the early games. With Barry likely to return, the potential for hilarity is off the charts.



ETA FEBRUARY 2015

PUB CAPCOM

DEV IN-HOUSE

TWITTER @RE_GAMES

Resident Evil Revelations 2

The Telltale-Virus

ALSO COMING
TO PS3

LAPSED FANS OF the *Resident Evil* series who have been put off by its drift towards bombast and action might ask why they should care about *Resident Evil Revelations 2*. Well, the pitch for the first *Revelations* game, originally released on 3DS, was that it was a return to the roots of the series and that's exactly what Capcom says it is continuing to do with the sequel that's on its way to PS4 and PS3.

That means more of a focus on horror, more of those confined, claustrophobic spaces that should make the game scarier than, say, *Resident Evil 6*. Indeed, the first *Revelations* game did have more of classic *Resident Evil* about it, in the sense that ammunition was relatively limited and there was a bit more emphasis on puzzle-solving than in recent mainline games. However, don't expect the game to be a complete throwback, as Capcom has been quite clear in saying that it sees the *Revelations* series as being something of a mix between classic *Resi* and aspects of the modern games.

Narratively speaking, the game also finds itself sandwiched between other titles in the series. *Revelations* takes place between *Resident Evil 5* and *6* and stars Claire Redfield and Moira Burton. Fans among you might remember Barry Burton showing a photo of his family in the very first *Resident Evil*

game and, yes, the grown-up Moira is indeed one of the children in that picture. Moira is not playable in *Revelations* campaign, but, rather, will accompany you while you're in control of Claire, with a flashlight and crowbar at her disposal. The former will be used to illuminate areas that would otherwise be too dark and to blind attacking enemies. The latter will be used to pry open blocked doors and to finish off enemies that you've taken to ground.

While the game might see a number of familiar characters return and be presenting itself as a blend of elements we've already seen in other *Resident Evil* games, it is also trying something new. Following a trend sparked by the success of Telltale's episodic output – such as *The Walking Dead* – *Revelations* will be released episodically. Unlike Telltale, though, Capcom is aiming to keep a much tighter release schedule, with the game's episodes separated by a one week gap. Capcom says that the idea is to try and get you chatting about the game with friends, as you might a TV show, analysing the story and trying to work out what's going to happen next. It's an interesting approach that solves the issue you might normally encounter when trying to chat with a friend about a game's story when mid-way through, in that you normally find yourselves at different points in the tale. Whether *Revelations 2* is going to have a narrative

that's interesting enough to compel you to have those kinds of discussions is another matter entirely. In any case, it'll be intriguing to say how well Capcom's episodic approach works and whether the release structure sees more use as a template going forward.

Pushing the story to one side for a moment, one of the most popular features of the original game was Raid mode, so fans will be pleased to hear that it's making a return in *Revelations 2*. Also, for those of you that are interested, pre-ordering the game will give you access to the Raid Throwback Pack, which features stages from previous games (that only applies to PlayStation consoles). The original was limited to two-player co-op, but we'd expect Capcom will look to expand that to four player in *Revelations 2*, ideally with online play supported. At least, we hope so, because four-player Raid mode sounds like an improvement.

It's early days yet, but we'd be lying if we said we expect *Revelations 2* to do anything spectacular. We do, however, expect it to build on the solid foundations laid by the first game and, if it does that, we should end up with something that's worth playing.

Paul Walker-Erzig

RESIDENT EVIL REVELATIONS 2 is being developed by Umbrella Corporation front Capcom. Check the website for more details: residentevil.net/en



SHARE THIS



THE BURTON BOOT

You're gonna get yourself a Burton Sandwich

We're hoping that Barry Burton's epic melee moves from *Resident Evil 5*'s Mercenaries mode return, assuming that Barry makes an appearance in Raid Mode. We want to see screenshots and videos of the ridiculous Burton Boot and the move that references what may be Mr Burton's most famous line: the Burton Sandwich.

ONE AMONG MANY

While Gearbox doesn't want to associate the game with MOBAs too strongly, the connections are clear. Incursion is a 5v5 mode where two armies of robotic minions wage a tug-of-war battle, with the players taking part and trying to tip the scales in their favour. You'll start at level 1 and rise up to 20 over the course of the game, unlocking new skills as you go. If you've played *League Of Legends* or *DOTA*, this will all sound quite familiar.

FPS X MOBA

While the announcement of *Battleborn* might have been disappointing to gamers waiting for *Borderlands 3*, don't write it off. Gearbox's new game is looking like an intriguing mixture of genres, a multiplayer FPS that seems to be taking inspiration from the MOBA genre on PC. MOBA staples like hordes of AI-controlled minions and a tug-of-war, base-destroying style of objective meld with classic FPS gameplay and a cast of varied characters to create something both new and familiar.

ONLY ONE DUDEBRO?

Nine characters have been announced so far, but Gearbox is aiming for around 20 in the final release. Each has been designed to feel as if they come from a different game from the others, offering a wide variety of play styles to accommodate more than just the FPS gamer. The appropriately named Oscar Mike will be most familiar to *Call Of Duty* fans, but other characters will have different weapons, abilities and approaches to combat.

MORE MODES

Other modes are planned, although only Incursion has been revealed so far. This is the mode that borrows the most from MOBAs according to Gearbox, so could others be more traditional FPS deathmatch fare, or will they take inspiration from other multiplayer genres? There is a lot more to learn before the game hits next year...

EVERYONE'S A WINNER

Battleborn's story is pretty basic: a universal apocalypse (blimey!) pulls together heroes from across space to try and stop it – or help it along. As such, the character design has licence to be all over the place, with enormous muscle-bound space marines standing side by side with lithe, bow-wielding elves and dapper gentlemen robots. Each is intended to play so differently that players from all genre backgrounds will be able to find someone they are familiar with.

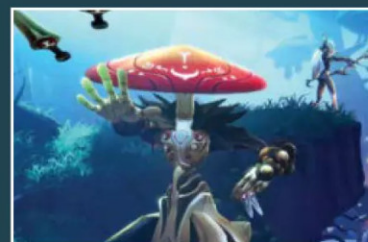
BORN FOR BATTLE

Here are just a few of the many characters you'll be able to choose from in *Battleborn*...



OSCAR MIKE

This is the guy for players used to standard FPS combat. He's an army dudebro with armour, a gun, grenades and all that regular *Call Of Duty* stuff, and plays just as you'd expect. A perfect character to learn the ropes with.



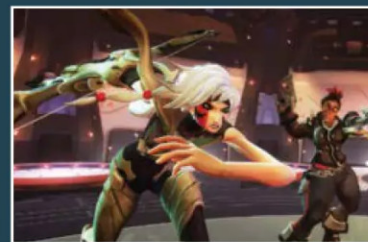
MIKO

A giant, bipedal mushroom creature, Miko can actually remove his hat and throw it as a weapon, channelling the spirit of Oddjob. A support character, he revolves mainly around buffing his teammates with a variety of abilities.



PHOEBE

An aristocratic swordswoman in a fancy dress, Phoebe has telekinetic powers with which she wields airborne rapiers. She is obviously far more focused on melee attacks than others, with limited ranged options.



THORN

A tall elf with extreme agility, Thorn is capable of far freer movement than other characters. Her bow fires slower than a gun but does a ton of damage, and her lack of health is offset by the fact she is really hard to hit.

Instant Expert

ETA Q4 2015 | DEV GEARBOX SOFTWARE | PUB 2K GAMES

Battleborn



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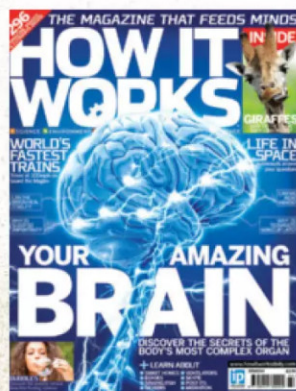
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Persona 5

The archetypal JRPG



THE PREMISE ON which the *Persona* games are based is brilliant. Bizarrely, they take influence from the work of analytical psychologist Carl Jung, with each of its characters drawing power from their psyche in the form of their 'persona'. They battle against 'shadows' that are, to put it simply, born from negative human emotions, hence the boss battles in *Persona 4* in which you battle against versions of the protagonists that are representative of their repressed insecurities, fears and flaws. Granted, Jung never talked about his archetypes levelling up and gaining new spells, but you get the picture.

In the previous entry in this JRPG series, *Persona 4*, the setup facilitated some interesting, engaging and at times surprisingly sophisticated character development. We say surprising, because nobody should be led to believe that the *Persona* games are in any way highbrow, or academic in their interests. After all, this is the series that takes as its subjects a group of high school students and, as such, one that brings with it a healthy dose of teenage angst, as well as plenty of levity, colour and J-pop. *Persona* then, is a series that's somehow managed to take disparate elements – from Carl Jung and his archetypes, to dungeon-crawling, to high school social simulation – and blends them together to create something that not only feels unique but that is actually quite fantastic.

We're hoping that odd, wonderful, eclectic mix of ideas and influences is precisely what we're going to be treated to in *Persona 5* next year and early indications suggest that's likely to be the case. Developer Atlus has suggested that the game will again have a psychological underpinning, thematically focused on the sense of being chained down, restricted and bored by modern life – the game will take us on a cathartic quest for freedom. Appropriately, it will be set in an urban environment; that should dovetail nicely with the game's attempt to structure its story and characters around the idea of being isolated and frustrated by the pressures of modern life. That all sounds rather dark and indeed, the only trailer that's been released for the game so far has a distinctly melancholic tone about it.

However, this is a *Persona* game, so don't expect it to be so po-faced all the time. As we follow the story of whatever group of high school students we're introduced to this time around, we expect plenty of silliness and fun alongside the psychological stuff. We are also expecting to see a strong focus on *Persona*'s strangely compelling social simulation side as we build relationships with *Persona 5*'s cast. Building social links with other characters in *Persona* strengthens your party and its members' abilities, while also providing an excellent way of fleshing out the game's characters and introducing lots of nice little subplots. Exactly how social links work in *Persona 5* and how they effect your abilities may well be slightly different than in the previous entry, but we'd expect them to be a significant feature given how well received that aspect of the game was in *Persona 4*.

As for what we can expect when it comes to the specifics of *Persona 5*'s story, we've got almost nothing to go on. In the game's sole trailer, there's a moment when the crowd around what we assume to be the protagonist appears to freeze and a blue flame begins to blaze. This seems likely to be related to the threat that we will invariably be up against. In that vein, is it significant that the protagonist is wearing glasses – used in *Persona 4* when visiting the alternate world in which all the game's battles take place? Could this indicate that the real world is blending with the alternate dimension inhabited by shadows in *Persona 5*? Perhaps... or maybe this character just wears glasses – we'll have to wait a little while to find out too, annoyingly.

With very little information on *Persona 5* currently available, it's difficult to say much more than that the game's theme sounds like something that'll work well within the context of a *Persona* game. The only other thing we've got to go on is that fact that *Persona 4* and its Vita version *Persona 4 Golden* were bloody brilliant. If *Persona 5* can match that standard, we will be very happy indeed.

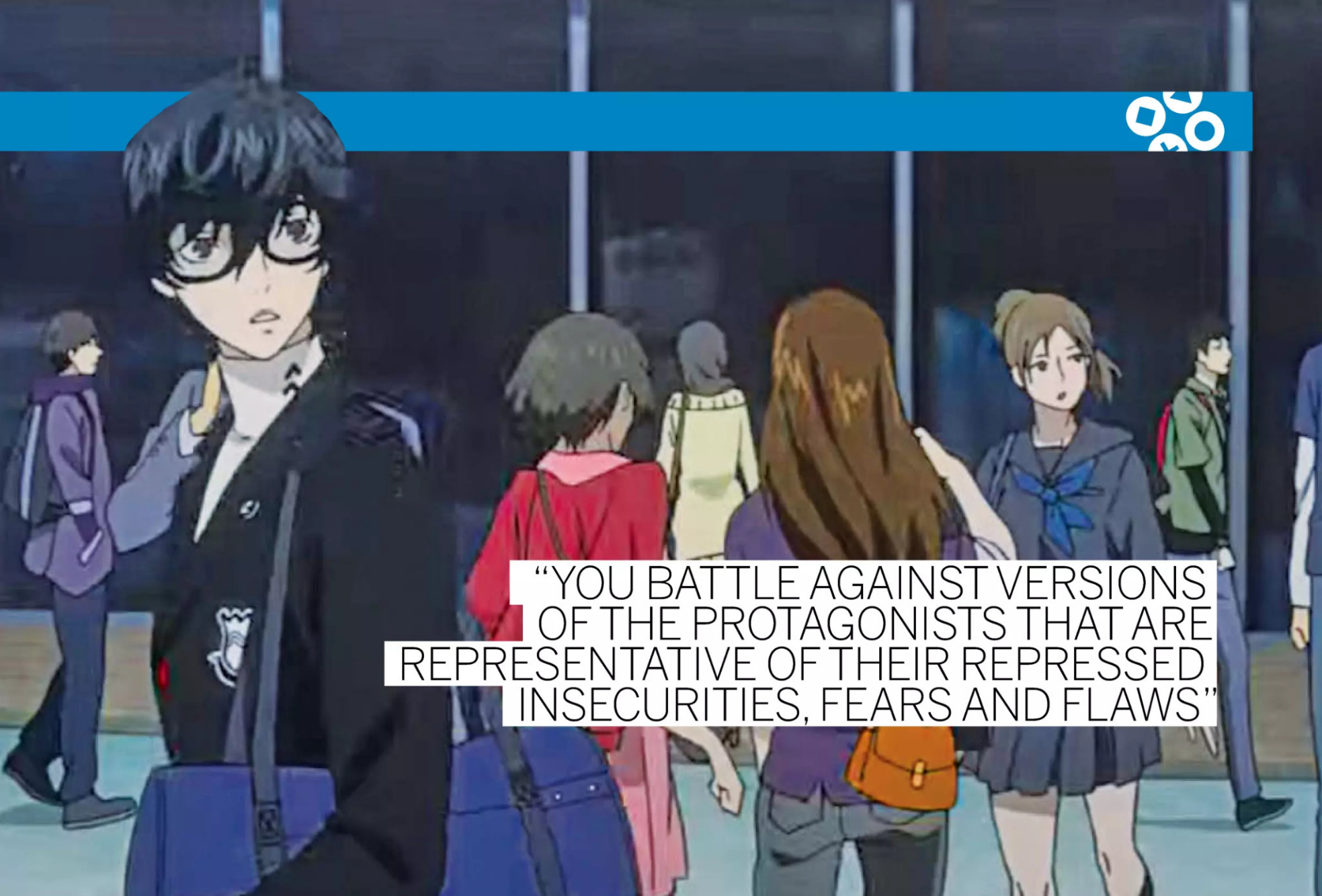
Paul Walker-Emig

PERSONA 5 is in the analyst's chair at Atlus. Check the website for more details: persona5.jp



Despite the bustle of the urban setting, there's a distinct sense of isolation in the *Persona 5* trailer.





“YOU BATTLE AGAINST VERSIONS OF THE PROTAGONISTS THAT ARE REPRESENTATIVE OF THEIR REPRESSED INSECURITIES, FEARS AND FLAWS”

WHAT MAKES THIS GAME GREAT?



Battles can get strategic as various enemies have exploitable weaknesses.



You only perform a set few actions each day, which really helps with pacing.



Every game keeps it fresh with new characters and a new setting for each title.



The games are visually striking providing plenty of colourful visuals for your eyes.



△×□ It all looks a little melancholy at the moment. However, we are expecting plenty of silliness to shine through as we learn more.

ANATOMY OF... ACE

You're going to have a classroom of characters to choose from when Final Fantasy Type-0 HD comes to PS4, but we're focusing on a character whose status as lead is underlined by his name: Ace

A CLASS ACT

Class Zero, of which Ace is a member, is comprised of elite students at the Magic Academy in the nation of Rubrum. This group of fourteen students ends up defending their nation when it is invaded by the Milites Empire. This is a *Final Fantasy* game, so, needless to say, Ace and his chums eventually end up embarking on a quest to save the world.

FACE UP

When battling foes with Ace, don't expect to be spending a lot of time scrolling through menus as you would be in many other *Final Fantasy* games. *Type-0*'s battle system is an action-based variant of *Final Fantasy*'s classic ATB system, mapping actions to the face buttons in order to allow you to act quickly. The battle party consists of three members, including the party leader.

TAKE IT EASY

When it comes to heading into battle, Ace is designed to be friendly to newcomers. His weapon is a pack of cards, rather than something silly like a sword or a knife. Ace has an ability whereby he can draw random cards in order to change the effects of his standard attack. Up to four cards can be drawn and pulling out multiple of the same type will magnify the power of the ability.

TO VICTORY!

Final Fantasy Type-0 follows a mission-based structure where you will be given a primary objective (which can be updated during battle) and various sub-objectives. On the world map, it's possible to find yourself embroiled in another type of conflict: Skirmishes. Skirmishes see the game take on an RTS style, requiring you to order troops around to capture key areas.

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Final Fantasy Type-0 HD



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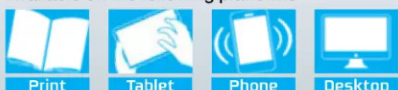


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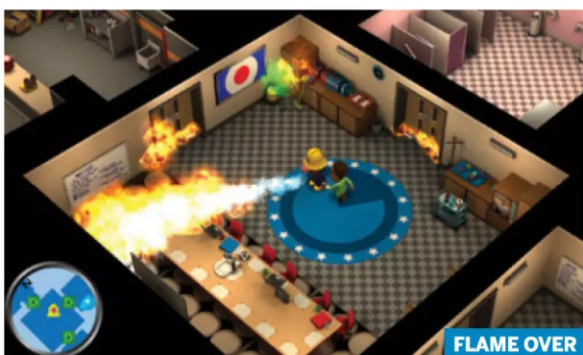
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PREVIEW ROUND-UP



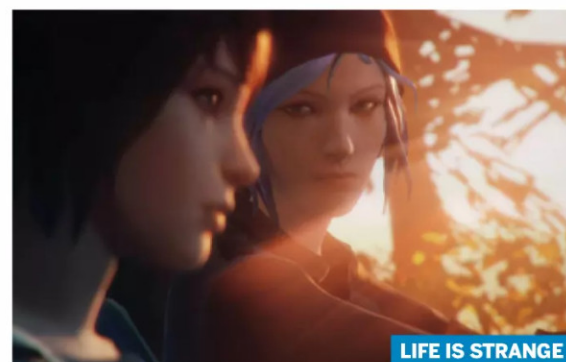
DON'T BE SUCKERED in by this game's cutesy exterior – we've played **FLAME OVER** and can confirm that it's a toughie. We knew that the game has procedurally-generated levels, but it was only when we got our hands on it and found out how hard it can be that we realised that this is a game that presents the kind of challenge we've come to expect from roguelikes. The basic set-up is that you need to run around putting out fires, saving people trapped in the burning environment. You'll need to deal with different types of fires using the appropriate equipment – you'll only make things worse for yourself if you try putting out an electrical fire with your water hose, for example – while it's also necessary to pay attention to your surroundings, lest you bypass the opportunity to switch off the electrics, cut out electrical fires, and therefore make your run a whole lot easier. What we've played of *Flame Over* has us looking forward to the game's release on Vita, which is due late this year.

A game that we're looking forward to playing just as much, but for completely different reasons, is



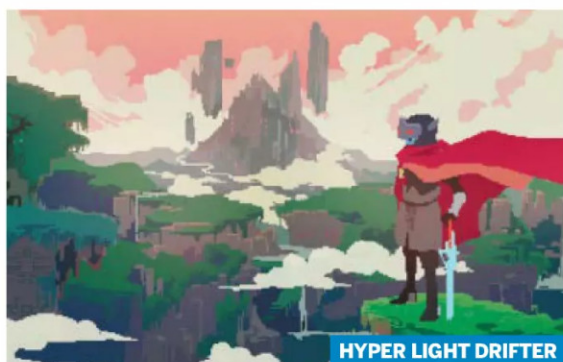
LIFE IS STRANGE. The antithesis to the twitch-based gameplay of *Flame Over*, this episodic game is far more contemplative and is very much story-focused. The game tells the story of Max and her friend Chloe as they investigate the disappearance of another young girl in their hometown. As is in vogue at the moment, choices that you make will have repercussions in later episodes. *Life Is Strange* brings a bit of a twist in that Max has the ability to rewind time in a fashion reminiscent of developer Dontnod's previous game, *Remember Me*. The mechanic allows you to play with the different options available to you, though you will have to commit to one course of action at some point and deal with the consequences. Dontnod has previously talked about wanting to tackle social issues and tell a mature story with *Life Is Strange* and we will be intrigued to find out if the ambitious team can do that.

While we're on the subject of remembering, how many of you remember that there's a game coming to PS4 called **SOMA**? It's from the creators of *Amnesia*, a PC title that's generally regarded as one of the scariest games of recent years. *Soma*'s got more of a science fiction bent, set in a research facility in which strange things are happening, with machines taking on human characteristics. *Soma* looks to be a bit more story-focused than *Amnesia*, perhaps even with a bit of philosophical stuff thrown in, and we have a little bit of a concern that could negatively impact on the fear factor. If it's anywhere near as scary as *Amnesia* though, then *Soma* could compete with *Silent Hills* for the title of 'the PS4 game responsible





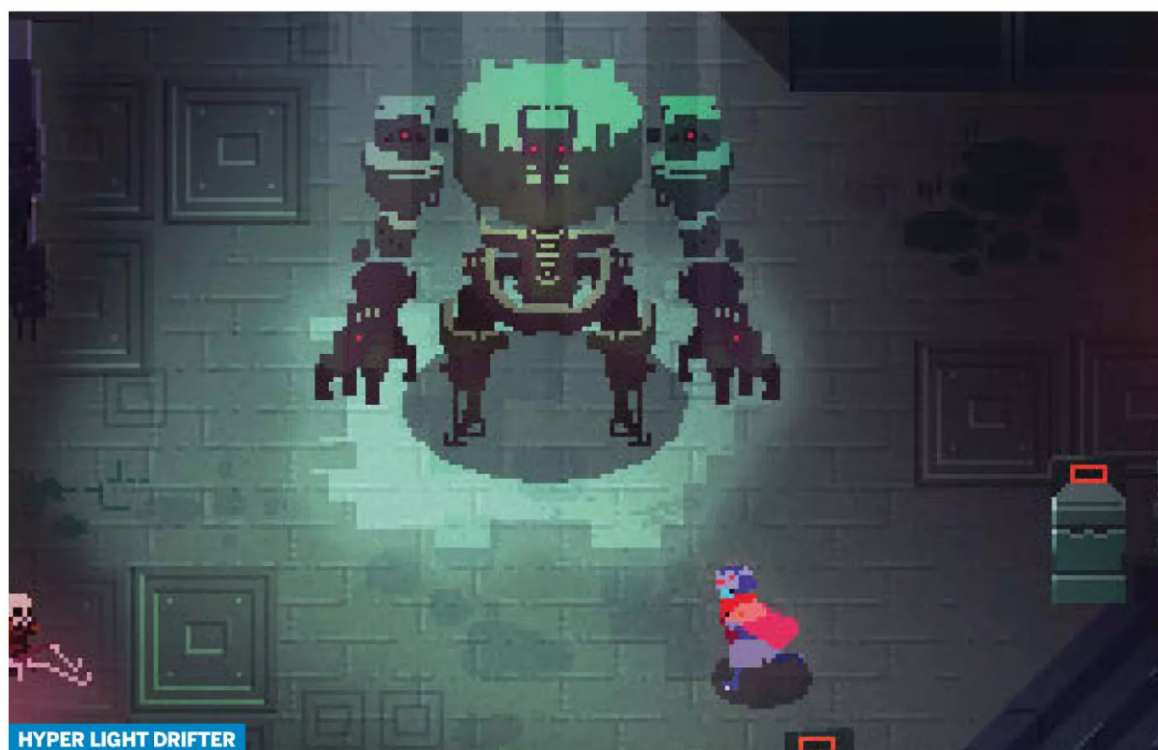
LIFE IS STRANGE



HYPER LIGHT DRIFTER

for the most heart attacks'. *Soma* is due in early 2015, the perfect appetiser for *Silent Hills*.

A game that should be coming sooner, assuming it still hits its target of releasing before the end of 2014, is Kickstarter success **HYPER LIGHT DRIFTER**. This *Legend Of Zelda*-inspired action RPG looks incredible, with wonderful animations rendered in a beautiful pixel art style reminiscent of *Superbrothers: Sword & Sworcery*. That much has been clear for a long time. With the closed beta having been out for a while now, though, we're now getting a greater sense of the quality of the game itself, rather than just its aesthetics. The good news is that feedback has been overwhelmingly positive, suggesting that the game will be as much a treat to play as it will be to look at when it comes to PS4 and PS Vita. It's a game for which we've been made to wait – it was delayed as a result of the Kickstarter campaign receiving more funding than expected and the scope of the game expanding as a consequence – but it is looking like that wait will be worthwhile.



HYPER LIGHT DRIFTER

“YOU WILL HAVE TO COMMIT TO ONE COURSE OF ACTION AT SOME POINT AND DEAL WITH THE CONSEQUENCES”



METAL GEAR SOLID V: THE PHANTOM PAIN

KOJIMA PRODUCTIONS CONTINUES to surprise us with new information on *The Phantom Pain*. The most striking new feature that's been shown off has to be the game's companion mechanic. It's been revealed that you will be able to recruit a number of characters to your cause over the course of the game and that they can be invited into battle to assist you with their special abilities.

We now know that Quiet, a character that was shown off some time ago, is one such buddy character. As a sniper with superhuman agility and the ability to go invisible, Quiet is ideal as a scout. As such, you can order her to spot enemies for you, aiding you as you sneak your way through enemy territory. Of course, when it comes to combat, Quiet can join the fray, moving between sniper spots and taking out enemies for you from

AVAILABLE ON: PS4 RELEASE DATE: 2015

afar. Perhaps the coolest example we've seen of how you can work in tandem with your companion characters though, is in a demo where Snake was under attack from a helicopter. In order to take it out, Snake threw a grenade into the air and had Quiet shoot it towards said helicopter and blow it into smithereens. Nice.

While we don't yet have details about its abilities, we also know that there will be a wolf companion that can be unlocked by rescuing a disarmingly cute, one-eyed, orphaned puppy. It'll grow into a full-size wolf after being shipped back to Mother Base and can accompany you on missions. Oh, and did we mention it wears an eye-patch, just like Snake?

No doubt there'll be more companion characters in *The Phantom Pain*, all of whom we expect to have abilities that support a different approach.



PLAYSTATION'S UNSUNG HEROES

In the shadows of giants like Call Of Duty and FIFA, small teams toil away on gaming's best kept secrets. Check out PlayStation's essential indie underdogs...



Terraria

IN BRIEF

Like *Minecraft*, only one dimension lighter

FORMAT PS4, PS3, Vita DEVELOPER Re-Logic

THE SIMPLE LOOK of *Minecraft* isn't for everybody, so perhaps this 2D take on the same open-ended format will be more enjoyable for those people? We hope so, as *Terraria* is excellent. The song remains the same – harvest resources, build whatever you like, craft new gear and try to survive when night falls and the monsters come out to play.

Even the game's small maps are absolutely huge, so the largest ones available will take you months to fully explore. We were worried initially that *Terraria* wouldn't translate too well from mouse/keyboard to controller but if anything, we actually prefer it on console. Get started on your world today and we'll drop by in a bit to see how you're getting on.



Rogue Legacy

IN BRIEF

Generation after generation of heroes sent to their doom

FORMAT PS4, PS3, Vita **DEVELOPER** Cellar Door Games

BRUTALLY DIFFICULT BUT immensely satisfying as a result, *Rogue Legacy* is a procedurally-generated 2D action platformer in which you must conquer a castle and the bosses within it. With every run, you'll have to pick a new heir of the character who just got killed, with the gold you looted in the run being used to improve each generation's abilities. Every character has unique traits, such as colour blindness and dwarfism. Sometimes you'll get screwed over with a nasty set to choose from but on other runs you'll get the perfect heir for the job.

1001 Spikes

IN BRIEF

Difficult? Let's just say it makes Super Meat Boy look easy

FORMAT PS4, Vita **DEVELOPER** Nicalis

PIXEL-PERFECT JUMPS, cheap deaths and barrels of frustration are what you can expect when you fire up *1001 Spikes* but as with the best titles in the genre, clearing a stage perfectly will make you feel like a gaming god. With games getting easier over the years, it is easy to forget how rough many 8-bit and 16-bit releases really were, but the retro aesthetic serves as a constant reminder – old games were hard and, generally speaking, new games that look like old games are also hard. You have been warned.



Sine Mora

IN BRIEF

It might look vintage, but keep an eye on the clock...

FORMAT PS3, Vita **DEVELOPER** Grasshopper Manufacture

BULLET HELL SHOOTERS tend to operate on one-hit-kill mechanics or at best a life bar, which makes *Sine Mora* unique. The only resource here is time, with damage to your ship speeding up the countdown to oblivion while killing enemies and grabbing power-ups can win you back precious seconds. Against the gigantic bosses, this can be truly tense and managing to weave through waves of enemy fire to bring down an oversized enemy with just a few seconds left on the clock is an utterly amazing feeling.

FEATURE | PLAYSTATION'S UNSUNG HEROES



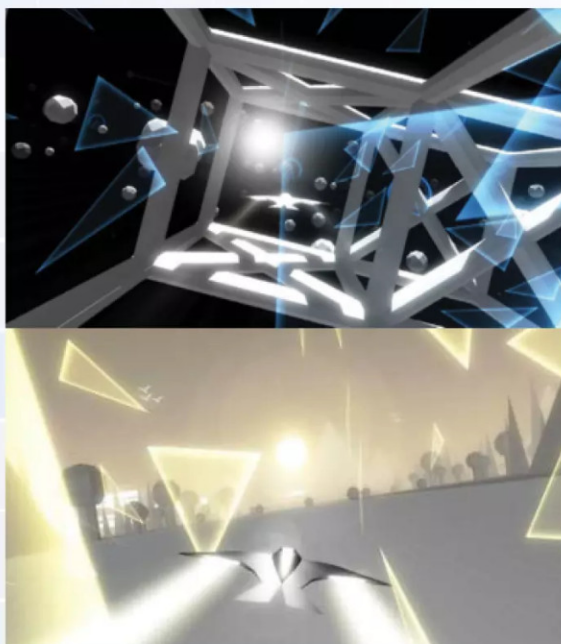
Where Is My Heart?

IN BRIEF

Mixed-up platformer that challenges genre conventions

FORMAT PS3, Vita **DEVELOPER** Die Gute Fabrik

PLATFORMERS ARE AN indie staple, the real trick being finding a novel way to push the genre forward. *Braid* used time, *Super Meat Boy* used difficulty and *Limbo* used tone, so what's the hook here? Why, fragmentation, of course! Single-screen levels are broken up into a bunch of smaller boxes – imagine each as a jigsaw puzzle piece that's out of place, but you still have to navigate your way through the full picture while it's all jumbled up. Confusing, sure, but oh-so-satisfying, especially since stages require you to use the powers of three different characters in harmony to reach the exit.



Race The Sun

IN BRIEF

Chase down adventure at mind-boggling speeds

FORMAT PS4, PS3, Vita **DEVELOPER** Flippfly

DO YOU LIKE chasing scores? Besting your friends on leaderboards? Then you'll probably love *Race The Sun*. The idea is that you've got to survive as long as possible, the level ending when the sun sets on you. In order to keep up with the sun as it disappears over the horizon, you'll need exceptional twitch reflexes in order to avoid the shadows and obstacles that will slow you down. Striking visuals and a sometimes terrifying pace make this almost as fun to watch as it is to play – perfect for passing the pad between mates to see who can fly the furthest.



Nidhogg

IN BRIEF

Frantic fencing tug-of-war, best played with friends

FORMAT PS4, Vita **DEVELOPER** Messhof

THERE HAVE ALREADY been some great multiplayer indie games on PS4 and the console just got another one in the form of *Nidhogg*. The back and forth nature of this fencing game will draw laughter, screams and whoops of joy from you and your friends as you alternately gain and lose ground. The objective? Push your opponent back through a series of screens until you get to the end, where they'll have the honour of being eaten by a giant worm. Obviously, between this, *Sportsfriends* and *Towerfall*, couch co-op is back with a vengeance on PS4.



Cytus Lambda

IN BRIEF

Classic rhythm action tap-along, and it's free!

FORMAT Vita, PS Mobile **DEVELOPER** Rayark Games

THE TRACK LIST won't be to everyone's tastes, but the same has been true of rhythm action games since the birth of the genre. At least here, the core game is free, with the developers opening up even more free tracks based on the total number of downloads. Now, a few years after release, there's a healthy list of free songs to tap along to and if you really get into the game, there are even more available to buy. This touchscreen-powered music game gets pretty crazy at higher difficulties but the interface is slick enough that skilled fingers will win out after a few goes.

Super Motherload

IN BRIEF

Space mining that demands precision and planning

FORMAT PS4, PS3 DEVELOPER Xgen Studios

A SLIGHTLY MORE serious alternative to *SteamWorld Dig*, *Super Motherload* follows the same template – mine ever deeper into the planet in search of rare resources – but with the added pressure of a dwindling fuel gauge. Run dry and you'll be stranded in the depths (which, on hard mode, means starting the game over – permadeath is harsh), making smart mining and regular pit stops essential. Play it in co-op and it's even more stressful, as everyone wants the best loot for themselves and to leave you with nothing else but dirt and dust. The greedy buggers.



Transistor

IN BRIEF

A stunning action RPG with a talking sword

FORMAT PS4 DEVELOPER Supergiant Games

BASTION WAS HERALDED as an indie classic the moment it arrived on Xbox 360 but sadly, the quaint narrated adventure never came to PlayStation. Oddly, follow-up *Transistor* – which trades *Bastion's* fantasy setting for a cool cyberpunk one – *only* came to PS4, and it's one of our favourite indies on the system so far. Combat can be played either real

time or turn-based (or with a hybrid of the two) and there's crazy depth to the customisation – you can equip up to four different attack processes from a vast pool of choices, with each conferring different perks when placed in active, passive and support slots. And all the while your giant, well-spoken sword guides you every step of the way.

LOVE INDIES?



SONY'S GONE CRAZY with the indie love lately, so we thought we'd follow suit. The wonderful games featured on these pages are joined by a host more in our latest digital special edition, the Indie 100 – an essential guide to the craziest and most enjoyable games you've never heard of. You can even follow direct links to the PlayStation Store and if you're logged into your PSN account, you'll be able to download free games and trials right to your console with just a few clicks. The Indie 100 is available now for mobiles and tablets. Get it today from www.greatdigitalmags.com



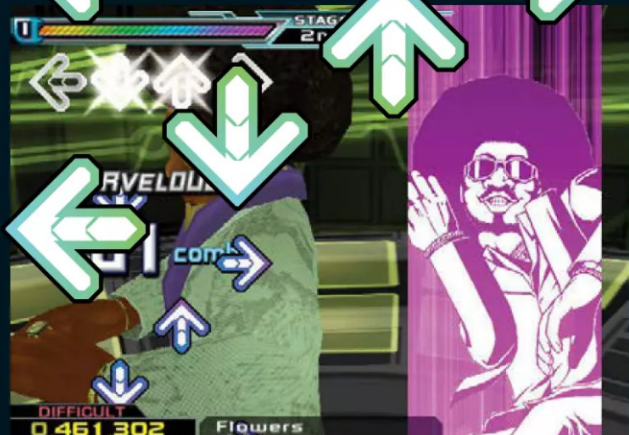
PS4 EVOLUTION

How your favourite games are better on PS4

RHYTHM ACTION

Rock isn't dead, people – developers are just being overly cautious after saturation caused the bottom to drop out of the music game market last generation.

Luke Albigés goes in search of a new breed of musical heroes...



If you've ever found yourself trying to make room in cupboards or bedrooms for more pretend musical instruments than anyone should really own, there's only one person to blame. No, not yourself – it can't be helped that games like *Rock Band* are among the best local multiplayer experiences in recent memory. It's not the developers, either. They're the clever sods that are letting you have fun with music, after all. No, the finger of blame points squarely at... a dog. Not just any dog, you understand. One particular dog, in a hat, who made a name for himself by copying what those around him were saying in time with some horribly catchy music. Yes, our fascination with plastic guitars can be almost entirely attributed to one *PaRappa The Rapper* because without him, rhythm action might not even be a genre at all.

A far cry from the multi-million dollar development costs of the modern industry, the PSone era was a far more affordable time to make games. Small teams with experimental ideas could put out games like *PaRappa* without relying on multi-platinum sales to break even and that's why it's here that many of the most inventive games and studios emerged. It's similar to today's indie scene in some ways, but that 20-year headstart made it much easier to create games the likes of which pretty much nobody had ever played. Given that a lot of people tap along to music of their own accord, NanaOnSha's assertion that this tapping should take place on a controller rather than on tables and legs basically invented a brand new genre, with some great characters, infectious grooves and unique presentation cementing *PaRappa* as an instant classic.

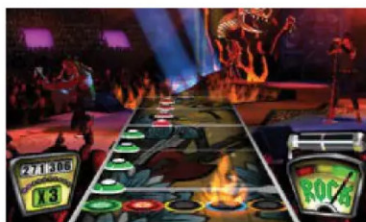
Konami's Bemani division would spring up not too long after *PaRappa's* release, a team devoted to creating new and interesting ways to interact with music. *Beatmania* is perhaps the most interesting of its series, its bespoke controllers serving up plastic

record platters and tap buttons over a decade ahead of *DJ Hero*, but it was a far simpler game that proved to be Konami's real breadwinner. It was as simple as following on-screen arrows and pressing in the right direction in time with the music, but there was one novel twist that got the whole gaming world out of its seats – you pressed the directional buttons with your feet rather than your fingers. *Dance Dance Revolution* (*Dancing Stage* in Europe), while nothing like actual dancing, was huge – Konami's masterstroke of including a few licensed slices of cheese for the target market meant that kids could leap around like idiots to S Club 7 while the rhythm action hardcore sweated to the breakneck beats at the harder end of the J-Pop soundtrack. Cabinets can still be found in just about every seaside arcade ever and probably rate among the smartest purchases their owners ever made – competitive/hyperactive kids and boozed-up holidaymakers will continue to throw pound coins into those machines for years to come.

But when the PS2 came around, attention quickly shifted to how good games could look and music games were among the first casualties along with 2D. Later in the generation, talented studios would bring the genre back to the fore and again, it was novelty in the driving seat. Harmonix had enjoyed some cult success with games like *FreQuency* and *Amplitude*, but it wasn't until it put out a game that shipped with a plastic guitar that it finally got a slot on the main stage. *Guitar Hero* is probably the touchstone for most modern gamers when it comes to rhythm action, and with good reason. The game delivered on all fronts and gave people who would never consider picking up a real guitar the chance to rock out like the best of them. *Rock Band* built on the formula in basically every way imaginable while Activision continued to milk the *Guitar Hero* brand without its creators' help, and the two franchises would soon be battling it out for the headline slot. It's here that our success story

“GUITAR HERO IS THE TOUCHSTONE FOR RHYTHM ACTION, WITH GOOD REASON”

5 THINGS EVERY MUSIC GAME NEEDS



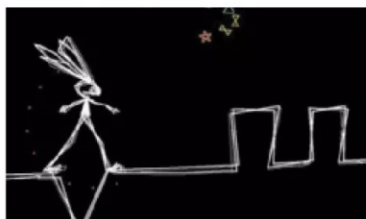
AMAZING TUNES

While the hardcore will happily tap along to just about anything, modern rhythm action games need to have a soundtrack just as tight as their gameplay. It doesn't have to be famous, just fit the theme.



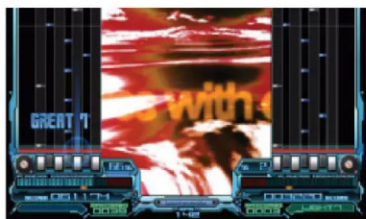
CALIBRATION

Try to go back to older music games from before the dawn of the flat-screen and you'll likely do terribly. It's not just you – most modern TVs add a degree of display latency.



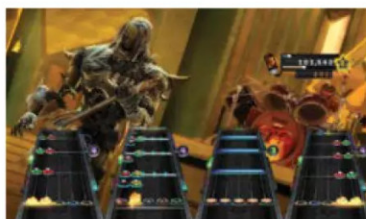
DIFFICULTY

Sure, you might not be able to play *Guitar Hero* on Expert, but the fact that it's there gives you something to work towards. As you train your fingers to do as they're told, you'll be glad it exists.



SUPPORT

The best games in the genre have expansive musical arsenals that offer their fans additional music from pretty much every genre imaginable. Yes, *Rock Band*, we're looking at you.



MULTIPLAYER

Whether it's going head-to-head with someone else or joining forces to tame an absolute beast of a song, it goes without saying that we want to rock out with our friends.



turns sour, with annual updates and myriad versions of each game burning fans out and killing the magic one unnecessary sequel at a time. As the market dried up, talented teams were, one by one, humiliated (members of both *Guitar Hero's* Neversoft and *DJ Hero's* FreeStyle Games ended up making *COD* map packs, while Harmonix was reportedly sold by Viacom for just \$50) and the genre died.

So here we are, going into 2015 without a music game of note on PS4 where just a few years ago, *Rock Band* and *Guitar Hero* were cornerstones of any good game collection. But that's going to change. Harmonix, now an independent studio, took to Kickstarter to fund a remake of PS2 classic *Amplitude* on PS4 and managed to hit its funding target with just hours to go, with the game slated for Q1 2015. This is significant for several reasons. Firstly, *Amplitude* is one of the single best games ever made, whether judged in the rhythm action field alone or the wider pantheon of gaming. But the second reason is the more exciting of the two – once *Amplitude* is on PS4 and now that *Dance Central* and *Fantasia* are both out on Xbox, the best team in the business apparently has a clean slate. Harmonix fields questions about the possibility of *Rock Band 4* in almost every interview conducted with the team, and it's telling that so many people want the best team and the best brand to be returned to its rightful throne. And there's a very real chance that exactly that will happen in the not-so-distant future.

The first stumbling block would have been that of interest, but it's clear that both players and team want *Rock Band 4* to be a thing – for what it's worth, we'd buy it in a heartbeat without even knowing a single song on the soundtrack, such is the pedigree of this team. The next is a technical one, Sony's lockout of older peripherals potentially killing such a game before it can even make it to market by requiring would-be players to buy all-new equipment. But with the *Skullgirls Encore* team



△×□ FreQuency was our introduction to Harmonix, a team that went on to be genre leaders.



FEATURE | PS4 EVOLUTION: RHYTHM ACTION

GAME CHANGER:
GUITAR HERO

While not even the first game to place a plastic axe in players' hands and tell them to rock (Konami's *Guitar Freaks* got there first), Harmonix's classic peripheral-based music game is the one we all remember. It was in the right place at the right time to spearhead the movement, with a cool look and feel as well as some all-time classics to rock out to where its forerunners had relied mainly on original music. *Guitar Freaks* also only used three buttons, whereas Harmonix finally settled on five – just enough to be able to emulate power chord hand shapes and fiddly solos but not so many that new players would be terrified to pick up the undersized plastic SG. The team would later take *Guitar Hero* to its logical conclusion with the *Rock Band* series, enabling drums, vocals and even keyboards as well as guitars and loading the store with literally thousands of downloadable songs to let living room live shows play out exactly how any given group would want.



△○×△ Even with just three buttons, *Amplitude*'s toughest songs proved a real test of rhythm and dexterity.

apparently coding support for PS3 arcade sticks into their PS4 fighter port, it sounds as though software-side support for old peripherals might be a reality – if Harmonix wants players to be able to use PS3 instruments, there's a precedent now that means that it isn't beyond the realms of possibility. And with other games allowing progress to be transferred from older consoles to new ones (even from Xbox 360 to PS4 in some cases), there's even the chance that previously bought DLC could work with a new game, licenses permitting.

there's one aspect where things stand to improve, it's connectivity. *Driveclub* may not be the best example to bring up, but it's merely a botched attempt at a new generation of *Need For Speed*'s Autolog and that couldn't be better suited to music games. Ongoing leaderboards and challenges based on not only total scores but also note streaks, section scores, play behaviour and other such 'lesser' stats would be awesome, offering players who can't fire scores into the millions their own battlefields to dispute with friends and rivals.

“IF HARMONIX WANTS PLAYERS TO BE ABLE TO USE PS3 INSTRUMENTS, THERE'S A PRECEDENT NOW”

Unlike many other genres, there's not obviously all that much about the rhythm action template that stands to massively improve on PS4. You tend to be so entranced by note charts and button prompts that improved background visuals and avatars end up being sort of meaningless, and if anything, the rise of streaming is likely to make it even harder to secure licensing for soundtrack choices. But if

The deeper you dig, though, the more awesome original ideas come to the fore that simply wouldn't be possible on any other console. While Share Play support might seem to fly in the makeup-caked face of a great local band session, it'd be great for helping groups work on their act before gig night, and there are other, more novel applications of the same streaming tech as well. What if, for instance, we could be remixing

PS3 INSPIRATION



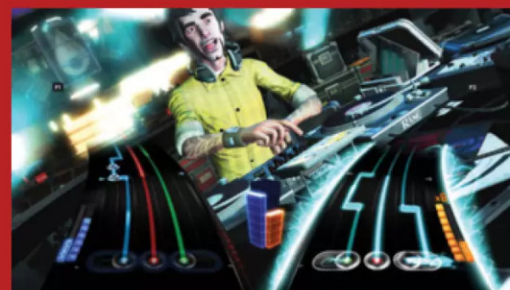
ROCK SCHOOL

Games like *Rock Band 3* and *Rocksmith* don't just send you in search of high scores – they can actually teach you the basics of playing instruments in real life. While music games without these kinds of transferable skills are still fun, taking an actual life skill away from a video game is a rare and rewarding treat.



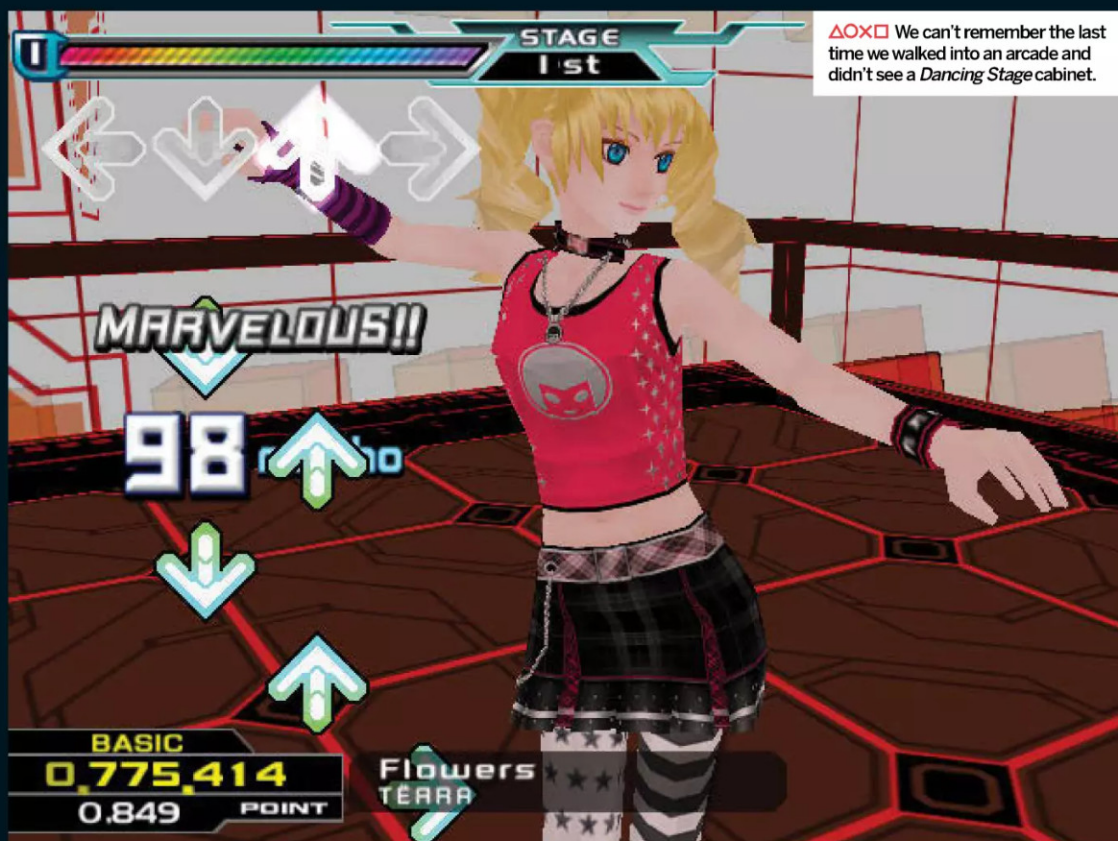
MULTI-GAME SUPPORT

It's far easier to fork out for some new DLC when you know it'll work across multiple games – better yet, a song that turns out to be a little dull in *Rock Band 3*, for instance, might be amazing when it all comes together in a spin-off like *Rock Band Blitz*. Here's hoping *Rock Band 4* lets us use our old music, if/when it happens...



2 MANY DJS

Developers will need to avoid clogging up our homes with plastic peripherals in all shapes and size, else it'll just be a repeat of last generation's fatigue and decline all over again. Controller support and letting players use existing peripherals will help – it's just a case of being smart with game design.



a track on the fly on our end while you're tasked with playing along to our original mix through your console? With *Music Unlimited* and now USB music playback on PS4, it's not even beyond the realms of possibility that we could see a procedural rhythm action game that creates button-tapping challenges on the fly based on whatever music you happen to be playing. *Vib-Ribbon* managed it some 15 years ago, after all, so it's not like it's impossible.

We're not stuck waiting for Harmonix to make a move, either – Zen has already given PS4 its first music game (*Just Dance* and *Singstar* don't count, and we'll ignore Ubisoft's *Rocksmith* port out of convenience) in the somewhat obtuse *Kickbeat*, and reports suggest that others will be joining soon. Actors and extras have apparently been filming crowd scenes for a new *Guitar Hero* game, although who would be developing such a thing when Neversoft has been closed and Harmonix is otherwise engaged is an interesting question. Beenox, Budcat and Vicarious Visions have done a few *Guitar Hero* games between them but with all due

respect, not one of those names is one we'd trust with the revival of an entire genre. If anything, we'd rather wait on Harmonix to show the new breed how things should be done – the team of musical experts has dominated the last two generations, so there are no safer hands than theirs.

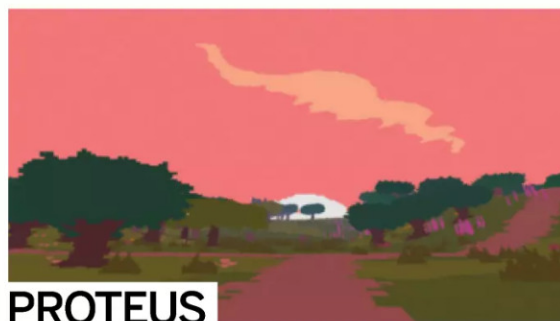
Don't take the lack of tour dates to mean that the band has imploded, then – rhythm action is just trying to find the right way to get back on the circuit and spending a little more time honing its new sound before taking it out on the road. It'll be back soon, and if Harmonix has anything to say about it, it'll be better than ever. Get ready to rock, people...





TOP TEN NON-VIOLENT GAMES

YOU'LL NOT HEAR US ARGUING THAT VIOLENCE SHOULD BE STRIPPED FROM VIDEOGAMES. AFTER ALL, SOME OF OUR FAVOURITE TITLES INVOLVE SHOOTING AND/OR PUNCHING PEOPLE, DEMONS, MONSTERS OR OTHER PLAYERS IN THE FACE. YOU CERTAINLY DON'T NEED VIOLENCE TO CREATE A GREAT GAME, THOUGH, AS THIS LOT ALL PROVE



PROTEUS

IT WOULD BE difficult to talk about non-violent games without including a game that's simply about enjoying your surroundings. In *Proteus* you do little more than explore its procedurally generated world, experimenting with how the game's soundtrack responds to your movements. Its complete lack of direction means it's not for everybody, but *Proteus'* relaxing nature seems to have clicked with plenty of people.



THE UNFINISHED SWAN

THE AESTHETICALLY BEAUTIFUL *The Unfinished Swan* is all about a young boy trying to find the titular unfinished swan that's gone missing from his deceased mother's favourite painting. In the early going, you're confronted with the stark whiteness of a completely blank world and must chuck paint around to reveal the environment around you, with new mechanics being introduced as you progress. It's a neat little visual treat.



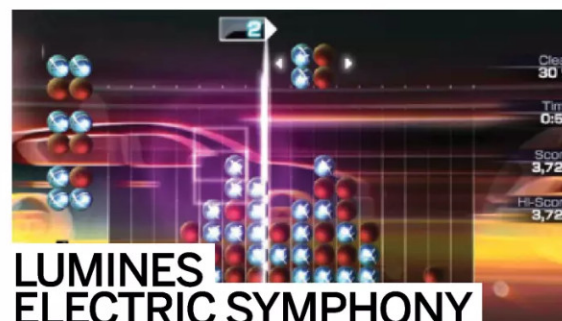
HOHOKUM

YOU COULD MAKE the argument that the bizarre and quirky *Hohokum* is a pure videogame, not in the sense that it's technically complex, but in the sense that it's all about play. In *Hohokum* you have to discover what your objective is and how to achieve it by exploring the world and experimenting with the way you can interact with the environment and its inhabitants. Needless to say, it also looks rather lovely, too.



FLOWER

FROM A DEVELOPER that's become something of a poster child for non-violent games (and which has another title on our list), Thatgamecompany's *Flower* is a game where you control a breeze blowing flower petals across a lush landscape using the PS3 or PS4 controller's motion control feature. With its lovely soundtrack and vivid visuals, this is a game that trades adrenaline-fuelled action for a more serene experience.



LUMINES ELECTRIC SYMPHONY

LUMINES IS A fine puzzle game. For the uninitiated amongst you, it's sort of like *Tetris*, in that you've got to place, match and clear blocks. The difference here is that the game has got a musical element. A line will periodically wipe across the screen at intervals dependent on the tempo of the track – getting as many points as you can when that line wipes the screen is what *Lumines* is all about.



EVERYBODY'S GOLF

WE BRIEFLY CONSIDERED a few sports games for our list of non-violent games, but its worth bearing in mind that even a game like *Fifa* allows you to take someone out with a violent, crunching tackle. Enter the unabashedly friendly *Everybody's Golf*, a game where it's all smiles, all the time. It's a game for everybody – it says so in the title. Oh, and don't be fooled by its cartoony presentation – it's an excellent golf game.



AMPLITUDE

FROM PARAPPA THE *Rapperto Vib-Ribbon*, the rhythm action genre has been flying the flag for non-violent games since before the other whippersnappers on this list were even born. As a representative for the genre, we've plumped for *Amplitude*. Developed by rhythm action masters Harmonix, it's one of the best examples of the way in which music and interactivity can dovetail to spectacular effect. If some of the games on our list have suggested that non-violent games don't require technical skill, then try getting to the top of *Amplitude's* leaderboards when the successfully Kickstarted remake wings its way onto PS4.



PORTAL 2

THERE MIGHT BE malevolent forces trying to plot a violent end for you in this title, but you'll not be partaking in violence. Rather, *Portal 2's* all about solving excellently designed puzzles. Striking the perfect balance between making you feel mentally strained and ensuring that you're rarely stuck for too long, the game does a brilliant job of making you feel smart, whether you're pondering physics puzzles, playing with bouncy orange goo, or perfecting some quick-fire portal work. Alongside all that, *Portal 2* has got some of the best characters and one of the funniest scripts you can hope to find in a videogame.



JOURNEY

WHEN WE TOLD you Thatgamecompany would be back on our list, you probably guessed it'd be *Journey*. This game really is beautiful, both in terms of its art style and its wonderful soundtrack, but also in how evocative it can be. *Journey* combines aesthetic brilliance with masterful pacing and in the process of doing so, manages to be at turns joyful, melancholic, tragic and hopeful. The game also has an interesting approach to multiplayer, using anonymity to create a connection between players who don't know each other and can't communicate directly. If you missed out on the PS3 version, don't worry – a PS4 release is coming soon.



FEZ

THE MORE YOU play *Fez*, the more you come to appreciate it. On one hand, it's a 2D puzzle platformer based around the smart idea of shifting between four planes in order to change the level and aid your progress. That aspect of the game is brilliant in and of itself, but *Fez* also has a whole other dimension, if you'll pardon the pun. The game is packed with secrets, many of which will require you to decipher deviously complex and obtuse puzzles. In order to solve them, you'll have

to bust out a notepad to decode a hidden language and crack a numerical system, to give but two examples. Some of the games on our list are great because of their sense of atmosphere, some because of the way they test your ability and some due to the way that they draw satisfaction from the act of exercising your mind, rather than twitch reactions. With its great sound design, beautiful pixel art, innovative platforming and dastardly puzzles, *Fez* has got a bit of all of that.



THE APOCALYPSE IS COMING

With the shockwave created by the explosion of the survival genre about to hit PS4, we speak to the developers behind three of its biggest hitters

SURVIVAL GAMES ARE a big deal. Take what has become the genre's flag bearer, *DayZ*, as an example. This colossal hit started off as a mod for *Arma II*, but became so popular that it ended up getting its own standalone release, making five million dollars in sales within its first 24 hours of release. It's not the only survival game that's doing well for itself on PC either – there's *Rust*, *The Forest*, *The Long Dark* and a whole lot more.

Up until now, it feels like us lot on consoles have been missing out a bit. After all, there's something undeniably intriguing about the way that survival games reject much of what modern big-budget game design has taught us to expect: they're typically opaque rather than heavily tutorialised; require you to set your own objectives; and lack a narrative in the traditional sense. They typically feature some kind of combat, but much of the tension they create is drawn from the need to complete seemingly mundane tasks – feeding yourself, finding water and clothing, and so on. The success of survival

games on PC proves that there's something inherently engaging about that formula, about the act of simply trying to stay alive in a world that's indifferent at best and actively hostile at worst.

The exciting thing for us is that the survival genre is about to hit PS4 in a big way, meaning that we're going to get the opportunity to experience what these games have to offer for ourselves. In fact, one game has already made a foray into the world of PlayStation in the form of Klei Entertainment's *Don't Starve*, but we've now got the king of survival *DayZ*, and SOE's *H1Z1* to look forward to as well. We spoke to the developers behind those three games to find out what it is that's made the genre such a phenomenon and whether we could see the model that helped fostered the growth of survival coming to PS4.

"The survival genre brought consequence back to gaming and it brought it back in a really fun way," *H1Z1*'s senior game designer Jimmy Whisenhunt tells us, explaining that the harsh nature of survival games



ΔOX□ It'll take a lot of time, commitment and caution to get gear this fancy in DayZ.

is what he feels really resonates with players. "For a long time, many of the most popular games were these moving picture machines that regularly rewarded players for completing tasks. Then, open-world PvP was introduced and suddenly players were being robbed at gunpoint," he continues. "Players now had to fight against and with other real people with no rules to survive. It's exhilarating, different and very challenging, which is what makes it so appealing."

The idea that consequence is an important factor in the success of survival games is one with which DayZ creator Dean Hall concurs. "I think people naturally connect with the concept of loss," Hall says while ruminating on what's made DayZ popular. Extolling the virtues of permadeath, Hall points to *Skyrim* as a title that's indicative of a greater tendency in videogames, describing it as a game in which he felt he could never really go backwards because there's a lack of consequence to death. "Risk of character death is what gives a sense of excitement to actually achieving," he continues, arguing that it "heightens the emotional experience" and makes DayZ exciting. "The risk is not able to be gamed, and there are no half measures in it – it's absolute

permadeath," he continues. "This really resonated with people and I think that is why it became so popular."

Hall argues that one of the reasons survival games have taken a different approach is that the driving forces behind their design are atypical. "Gaming has been obsessed with fun. I feel like we've categorised people who played games as 'gamers' and taken what is a subset of people interested in games and used that to drive design," he explains. "The focus is often on making an exciting mechanic, a cool feature, not as often on the experience or on emotional contexts," he says. "Making an open-world game can be difficult because you remove much of the control over an experience that more traditional game projects usually require – publishers want to clearly know what is being done and how players are going to use it."

That reticence to relinquish control to the players is something that's very much not part of the survival genre. Indeed, one of the things that's fascinating about it is the way that surprising, terrifying and exhilarating moments arise naturally from a coalescence of mechanics and systems, rather than through tightly scripted or contrived scenarios. That's particularly in evidence in multiplayer

Survival Guide

1. Scout your area – If you've ever watched *Survivorman*, you know that one of the first things you need to do is check your surroundings to see how your environment could help or hinder you. You're going to want to grab any resources you can as you map out your surroundings.
2. Stake a claim – It makes sense to set up a base of operations in an area that you know is relatively safe. Ideally, you want to choose a location that places you within a reasonable distance of the key resources you need to survive.
3. Set your objectives – What item is best going to help you stay alive and what raw materials do you need to craft it? Get your priorities in order, set yourself clear goals and you'll have a better chance of making it.
4. Stockpile for disaster – Things can always go wrong in a survival game. Learn from the noble squirrel – you should always stockpile while times are good.
5. Stay on your toes – Once you start to get comfortable, that's when you get cocky. Remember – one mistake and you can lose everything, so always be wary. That goes double when other players come into play.

games like *DayZ* and *H1Z1* where the fact that the games' open worlds are populated with other players means anything can happen.

"Survival games allow players to do *whatever they want*," says Whisenhunt. "Players can walk up to anyone at any time, scream at them like a maniac, beg them for food or have a friendly conversation, and that's refreshing to a lot of people," he continues. Chuck permadeath into the equation – the knowledge that every interaction with another player could save your life, or see you lose everything – and it's easy to see what makes the open nature of survival games so exciting.

"I think the hook that's made these sorts of survival experiences catch on is the way that they trust their players," *Don't Starve* designer Seth Rosen tells us. "For several years, there was a strong trend for games to tutorialise really heavily and provide constant splashy feedback. Those things still exist, but over the past few years, we've started to see more and more games that drop players right into the experience and let them sort it out from there."

Rosen explains that survival games tend to have systems with an internal logic that can be discovered through engagement and that this act of figuring out how the game works is part of the fun. "Our brains like analysing systems and puzzling through their inner workings, which is the main thing that these survival games offer to new players," he says. "For veterans who have gone through that discovery process, it becomes a matter of applying their knowledge and skills under duress and seeing how long they can last: not dissimilar from games based on achieving a high score, just with a more abstract definition of score."

Survival games have earned their success in large part through a willingness to trust their players, then. We wonder if the reason that it's taken so long for the survival genre to make the transition from PC to console is partly a result of the fact that there's

been something of an unwillingness to trust us console players.

"Consoles have traditionally offered a very structured experience," Hall says. "Even *Minecraft* on console includes a tutorial, for example. Survival games often have to break this and true open-world (particularly in multiplayer) games break this significantly." Hall tells us that this makes the development of survival games "a very risky proposition," hence the fact that all the big name survival games have got their funding through early access models, rather than publishers.

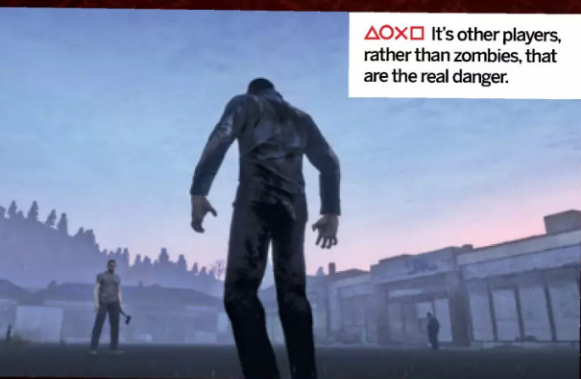
In fact, Whisenhunt goes so far as to suggest that early access is a necessary part of developing a survival game. "Because sandbox survival games offer players nearly endless possibilities, there are greater systems and unknowns that arise during development," he says.

"It's imperative that games like this get real player feedback and interaction early on to ensure the team is on the right track."

It's great that we're going to be getting the likes of *DayZ* and *H1Z1*, but we can't help but feel that it would be good to have some kind of early access model on PS4 so that we're not beholden to publishers' caution and can get in on games like *DayZ* and *H1Z1* at ground level. As Hall and Whisenhunt suggest, early access is a model that can help developers experiment with fresh and interesting, albeit risky, ideas. That's something we think it would be great to be a part of. Hall encapsulates the feeling perfectly: "I feel like console gamers want to be part of how games grow and for the next *Minecraft* to have appeared on their favourite system." We do, indeed. So is that a possibility?

"Yes, absolutely," Rosen answers, with the caveat that the likes of Sony are going to have to become more





ΔOX□ It's other players, rather than zombies, that are the real danger.



ΔOX□ SOE is focusing on getting the PC version of *H1Z1* out first, but we will be getting a PS4 release.

flexible for that to happen. "The patching process on console platforms is more involved," he explains. "Each update to a game has to be submitted to the platform holder and checked against all of their requirements before it can be distributed. With early access, that's a nonstarter: you need to be able to be agile and push frequent updates without a lot of ceremony around preparing the builds and distributing them," he explains. "I suspect it'll happen at some point, but that submission process will have to change before it's really viable."

If the idea of an early access model on PS4 seems fanciful, it's worth remembering that alphas and betas used to be very much a 'PC thing'. With the likes of *Destiny*, *Hardline* and *Evolve*, we're now seeing the alpha become a regular feature on PS4. That means that Sony is already moving in a direction that makes the idea of early access on PS4 viable. In fact, Sony's already preparing to test the waters. "An early access-like model could definitely work on consoles," says Whisenhunt. "In fact, *PlanetSide 2* is currently prepping for early access on PlayStation."

You could argue that a console should only have 'finished' games, that Sony has a responsibility to make sure that anything that appears on PS4 is up to snuff, that we shouldn't try to transform the PS4 into a PC. However, we would suggest that early access is just another way of buying and experiencing games. Just because it's not a traditional console way of doing things, we don't see why it can't bring something extra to the PS4. After all, it won't prevent the PS4 from doing the things it already does well. If that's not enough for you, just remember that early access gave birth to *DayZ*, *H1Z1*, *Don't Starve* and many others. Without it, we wouldn't have those games making their way to PS4.

DAYZ BY NUMBERS

225KM²

SIZE OF POST-SOVIET
STATE OF CHERNARUS+
IN WHICH THE
GAME IS SET



200

COPIES PER MINUTE BEING PURCHASED
DURING PEAK SALES



45,000

APPROXIMATE RECORD
OF CONCURRENT
PLAYERS



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24HRS

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Promo code XMAS141



Assassin's Creed: Unity

La Fraternité is back



DETAILS

PUBLISHER
Ubisoft

DEVELOPER
Ubisoft Montreal

PRICE
£54.99

PLAYERS
1-4

AGE RATING
18

INSTALL SIZE
38.2 GB

TWITTER
@assassinscreed

Trophies 51



THE HOPE WITH

Assassin's Creed: Unity was that its revolutionary setting would prove to be emblematic of the game itself, that it would challenge our preconceptions of what *Assassin's Creed* is, rethink its fundamentals in a change for the series that would emulate the French Revolution's radical reconfiguration of Ancien Régime Europe. The game does make genuine attempts to address some of the *AC* series' lingering issues and, in many aspects, is a marked improvement as a result. However, these changes don't quite represent the revolution we were hoping for. Consequently, while *Unity* feels like a step in the right direction, it still suffers from a sense of having been here and done this before.

That sense of déjà vu is mitigated somewhat by the impressive rendering of revolutionary Paris presented by *Unity*. The scale of the city and the detail with which it's been constructed means that you'll be presented with some wonderful vistas when you

take to the rooftops. Conversely, move down to ground level and the density of the Parisian population is equally as striking, helping to lend a sense of authenticity to the city. *Unity* gives with one hand and takes with the other, however, showing a staggering lack of interest in the era it has chosen for its setting. *Unity* has a materialist's obsession for history, focusing fastidiously on the buildings and architecture of Paris, whilst almost completely ignoring the ideological conflicts that make that period so fascinating. We are talking about the French Revolution, an event that sent shockwaves throughout the western world, forging new concepts and ideas within the furnace of social change, an event in which ordinary people gave their lives to break the power of the monarchy and birth the foundations of modern democracy.

Unity seemingly cares not one iota about any of that. Instead, *Unity*'s story focuses on the machinations of privileged elites and their secret clubs, telling a clichéd tale predicated

on backstabbing and conspiracies. The story of the French Revolution is bafflingly absent in all that, with the way that the Assassins and Templars are connected to the factions fighting in the revolution unclear (the only hints we get about allegiances is that Ubisoft might have a little contempt for France's revolutionaries). The game's woeful underuse of the revolution is not only jarring given the themes of the series, but ends up leaving you feeling somewhat disconnected to what is happening around you. *Unity* presents you with a world that you want to immerse yourself in, where important events are happening that you want to feel a part of as you travel through it. While it's beautiful at times, it's a shame then that the game's story leads to *Unity*'s revolutionary Paris feeling too much like window dressing.

It's also worth mentioning that *Unity*'s version of Paris can occasionally be let down by technical hiccups. Frame-rate dips are frequent, but very rarely severe enough to substantially impact on the experience

"UNITY'S MAP LOOKS
LIKE A TODDLER HAS
VOMITED ON AN ATLAS"



EXCLUSIVE ANALYSIS
WATCH NOW ON YouTube
www.youtube.com/PlayMagUK



of playing the game. Additionally, we've encountered a fair number of bugs. None of these bugs were game-breaking, but some of them were frustrating – inexplicably dropping dead for no apparent reason being a particular highlight in that regard. We don't think any of the game's technical issues are significant enough that you should be put off the game, but it's something to be aware of. All this stuff is reminiscent of issues that have been fixed in previous *Assassin's Creed* games via patches, so we hope that'll be the case here, too.

Things are by no means all bad with *Unity*, though, and that's largely down to the aforementioned changes the game makes. Perhaps the most welcome of these relate to *Unity*'s mission design. While the patented *Assassin's Creed* 'follow the man' and 'insta-fail' missions aren't entirely absent, they are far less common than in past entries in the series. In their place you'll find a far more interesting fare. It's particularly welcome that Ubisoft has remembered that you're supposed to be an assassin within this fiction and that many of the game's missions have been designed with that in mind. Assassination missions now task you with infiltrating a location in order to reach your target. In each case, there are multiple entrances to the location and multiple approaches that you can take to tackling obstacles placed in your way, making *Unity* far more open than its predecessors in terms of player agency.

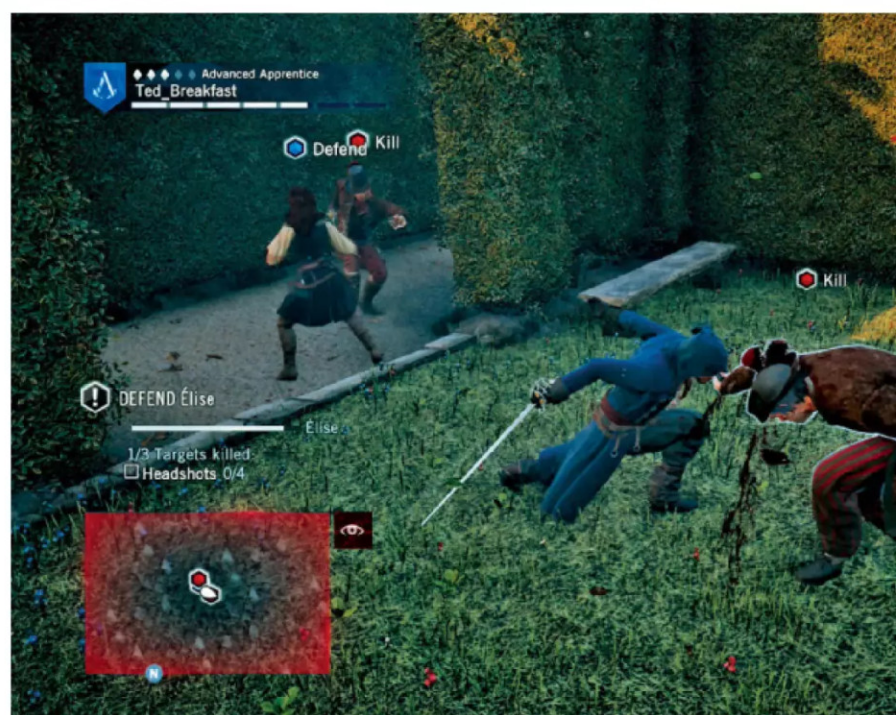
Along the way, you can find and complete secondary objectives that can ease your path to the target – freeing prisoners to start a riot and take guards out of the equation, for example – the idea being that assassinations can play out in a variety of different ways. Admittedly, these missions aren't quite as open as Ubisoft suggested when talking about how they were changing things in *Unity* ahead of release. Compare *Unity* to the likes of *Dishonored*, for example, and its assassination missions look terribly contrived. In the context of the series' history, though, *Unity* is much better at fostering the sense of being a sneaky, lethal assassin by virtue of opening things up a bit and is much more satisfying as a result.



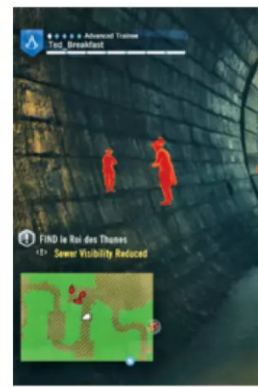
“IN THE CONTEXT OF THE SERIES, UNITY IS MUCH BETTER AT FOSTERING THE SENSE OF BEING A SNEAKY ASSASSIN”

Part of the reason *Unity* is able to do this lies in the improvement of stealth. A new stealth stance and cover mechanic makes skulking around and taking out guards while remaining incognito far more practical, if still a little messy and unpredictable in comparison to more accomplished stealth games. It's a good job these improvements have been made, too, because combat is far more difficult in *Unity*, with guards far more lethal than in past instalments. That not only makes hand-to-hand combat less mundane, but also pushes you to role-play as the stealthy assassin you're meant to be. Rather than interpreting that as the game closing off your options, we'd be inclined to suggest that it actually lends the game a far better balance and makes completing objectives far more rewarding.

That extends to some of the game's side missions, too. Continuing an *Assassin's Creed* tradition, *Unity*'s map look likes a toddler has vomited on an atlas, with a staggering amount of icons cluttering your view of Paris and vying for your attention. While we can't say that we are fans of Ubisoft's 'more is always better' approach to designing AC games, we can at least say there's

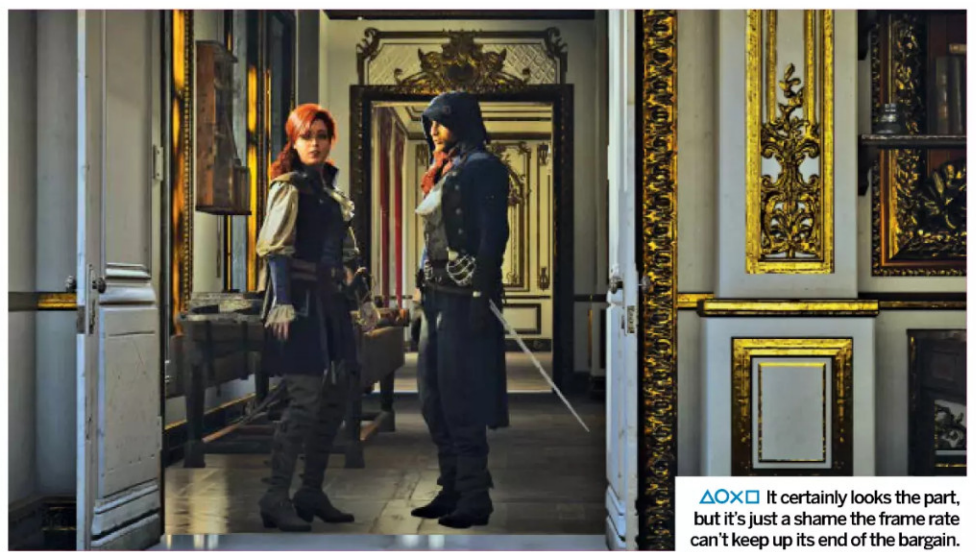


△○×□ And then everybody got stabbed in the heart forever. The end.





△OX□ Things We Shouldn't Need To See In Patch Notes #1: "Fixed an issue where under some circumstances, Arno can fall through ground"



plenty to do. Some of that may well be trash, but alongside the usual filler, some thought has been put in to providing you with something engaging to do alongside the main campaign. New investigative missions provide a welcome distraction, for example, tasking you with searching for clues at the scene of murders and collecting witness statements before you decide who the evidence points to and make an accusation.

Then, of course, there are the icons that relate to one of *Unity's* headline features – online co-op. This experience will vary widely if you end up playing with randoms – you need partners who are prepared to work as a team, or the whole thing feels a little pointless. When you do

get a good team together though, co-op missions can be intensely enjoyable as you stealthily take out guards in tandem or battle a host of enemies back to back. For that reason, this is a mode that will be at its best if you can get a group of four friends together. We're not sure the depth is there to keep you interested for the long term, but the co-op is a nice addition nonetheless.

Unity is arguably the best stealth game in the *Assassin's Creed* series and is one that captures the feeling of being an assassin far better than the last few entries. While it is an improvement within the context of the *Assassin's Creed* series, though, it can still feel awkward and imprecise, and the stealth mechanics suffer somewhat later on, when there's less room for mistakes.

We say mistakes, but what we really mean is the game's aforementioned awkward handling. Leaping onto a ledge unintentionally, or struggling to get into the piece of cover you're aiming for often leads to failure and that is frustrating. Essentially, the more complex the game gets in terms of challenge, the more its flaws come to the fore. Throughout *Unity*, there's a sense that things are better, but not quite as good as they could be – missions are more open, but can still feel inflexible; parkour is more controlled, but can still be unwieldy; the world can be stunning, but lacks soul. *Unity's* improvements are enough to make it fun but for the many positives, there's almost always a caveat.

Paul Walker-Emig

HOW TO PREPARE FOR CO-OP

Unity allows you to upgrade your character using Sync points you earn in-game. If you're planning on taking on the game's co-op missions, there are a few abilities that you'll want to focus on getting to aid you and your buddies as you take on Templars...



ASSASSIN'S CACHE

To be found in the ranged skill set and costing ten Sync points, this ability allows you to create a cache from which you and your fellow Assassin's can recover bombs and other consumables.



DISGUISE

Another one from the stealth set of skills, costing six Sync points, this skill allows you to temporarily disguise yourself and nearby allies, allowing you to go unseen by enemies, if you don't get too close.



COMMUNAL SENSE

Now that Eagle Vision has a cooldown, the benefits of this skill, which extends your Eagle Vision to nearby allies, should be obvious. It costs four Sync points and is to be found amongst the stealth skills.



GROUP HEALING

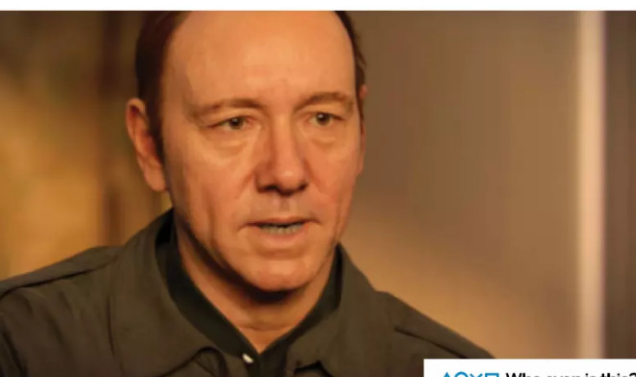
If any of your allies die during a co-op mission, you'll fail, so their health bar is as important as yours. Fortunately, this health skill, costing ten Sync points, allows you to heal your allies.



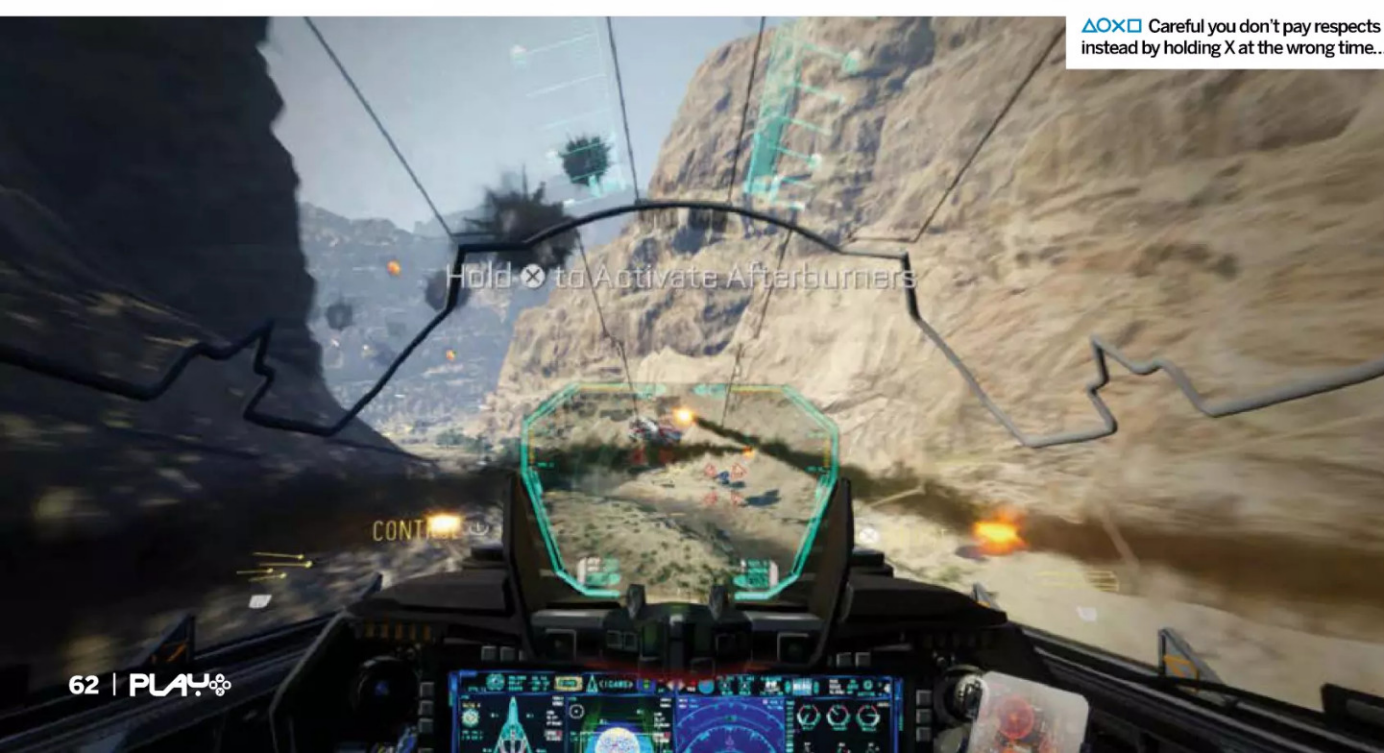
VERDICT

There's a catch to more or less every improvement *Unity* makes, but the enhancements made to stealth and missions design in particular are just about enough to counter the malaise setting in.

65%



ΔOXO Who even is this?



Call Of Duty: Advanced Warfare

To the victor go the spoils



ALSO ON PS3

THIS WAS THE year that we were prepared to give up *Call Of Duty*. We were ready for a fresh start without any more Christmas periods spent rushing to Prestige and shouting at teenagers online. We were ready to give up a habit that we've had since *Call Of Duty 2* in 2005. Thankfully, new kid on the block (sort of) Sledgehammer Games has legitimately rejuvenated the franchise in one fell swoop, creating a modern, tight and exciting first-person shooter that is beyond any of the others that we've seen so far on PS4.

You are Mitchell, played by Troy Baker, who rouses the ire of PMC owner Jonathan Irons, played by some bloke from the movies. With a few sharp twists and turns along the way, the single-player campaign in *Advanced Warfare* feels like the most complete since *Modern Warfare 2*, with a decent plot and a noticeable improvement in terms of acting. For the first time there are actual cutscenes, which help the pace of the

game and really show off the graphical prowess at work. *Killzone Shadow Fall* might have seemed amazing a year ago, but the visuals in *COD*'s new cutscenes are truly outstanding.

However, with a franchise that has never exactly looked bad and zips along at a solid 60 frames, graphics don't need to masquerade as a selling point. The most important facet of a first-person shooter is the handling, and here is where *COD* excels. There's a wide array of weapons in the game, and Sledgehammer has done a far better job of assembling a weighty and responsive arsenal than Infinity Ward and Treyarch have in the last few years, from the usual suspects (assault rifles, SMGs, sniper rifles) to the gloriously farfetched. You all saw the 'energy' rifles, right? Yeah, they're pretty neat.

New abilities have come into play, courtesy of your Exo suit. Exos are (you guessed it) exoskeleton-type machines that grant you all manner of additional, practically superhuman abilities. There are double jumps, air dashes and even a grappling hook, all of which really elevate some of the campaign's more open levels later in the game. Grenade handling has been overhauled, allowing you to switch between variants before throwing by holding either L1 or R1 – depending on whether you're going lethal or non-lethal – and then cycling through with Square. Our favourite, and the most useful, is the Threat Grenade, which highlights enemies in the immediate area for 30 seconds or so, making it easier to identify danger zones and operate around them. On Veteran difficulty, they're basically essential. There is still the odd section that is an incoherent, shooty mess but such slips aside, it's generally very good.

DETAILS

PUBLISHER
Activision

DEVELOPER
Sledgehammer Games

PSN PRICE
£59.99

PLAYERS
1-18

INSTALL SIZE
42.6 GB

AGE RATING
18

TWITTER
@CallOfDuty

Trophies 51



ΔOXO Careful you don't pay respects instead by holding X at the wrong time...



△OX□ We lasered the hell out of this guy. War is hell.



△OX□ While they clearly emulate *Battlefield*, vehicle sections in *Advanced Warfare* are pretty damn fun.

THE SPICE OF LIFE

Picking your go-to loadout can be tricky, so we're on hand with our favourites



SPEEDY

We love to charge across the map – it makes you harder to hit and we're extremely impatient. To aid us in our unending sprint into oblivion we're packing the Bal-27 with a foregrip and suppressor, Lightweight for speed, Blind Eye for avoiding some of the nastier Scorestreaks, and Toughness for good measure. For our Exo ability we've gone with Overclock for extra speed, and we've chucked in a Stun Grenade as well. Element of surprise and all that...



SNEAKY

If we want to stay off the radar then this is our go-to setup. The HBRa3 has a lovely iron sight on it and handles perfectly with a foregrip and suppressor. We combined that with the Perk 2 Greed Wildcard, allowing us to equip Blind Eye and Cold Blooded for extra stealth, Low Profile and Blast Suppression helps us stay invisible on the map. Add to this the Cloak Exo ability that grants you temporary invisibility and you've got the perfect camping class. Just don't camp.

"YOU GET THE TIGHT, FRENETIC EXPERIENCE THAT ONLY COD REALLY DELIVERS"

We could go on for six pages about multiplayer alone, but it's best discovered for yourself. On the one hand, you get the tight, frenetic experience that only *COD* really delivers (on console, at least), but it has been vastly augmented by the new Exo abilities, making it a different beast altogether. A lot was made of Sledgehammer banging on about 'verticality' and, although we scoffed at the term at the time, the developer wasn't lying. Maps have been designed with the Exo in mind while still showing an understanding of the need for choke points and narrow dark spaces to keep



the energy up. Some new modes such as Momentum and Uplink add some welcome variety, too.

The online component is as vital as ever, and yet for once, the quality of the single-player campaign actually takes some of the heat off it, making this a far more rounded *COD* effort overall in comparison to the previous entries in the series. Plenty of you probably buy *COD* for the multiplayer, but doing so with *Advanced Warfare* would genuinely limit your experience of the game. We don't want to spoil too many surprises, but let's just say that you only see some of the Exo abilities

in multiplayer, and the ones you'd miss are in equal parts ridiculous and awesome.

Advanced Warfare represents a new era for the series, bringing with it the best single-player campaign in ages and a world-beating multiplayer suite. Although, on the multiplayer front, did you really expect anything different?

Steve Holmes

VERDICT

It pretends it has rewritten the rules more than it actually has but, even so, *Advanced Warfare* is the best Call Of Duty release since *Black Ops*, and the best FPS on the PS4 today.

87%



Grand Theft Auto V

Viva la Trevorlution



NEVER IN ALL our years of gaming have we known a single new camera angle to change things up so much. It should be

little more than a bullet point on a press release, but it's so much more than that in reality – coupled with sharper visuals and a more lifelike city, it makes *GTA V* on PS4 way more immersive and affecting than its PS3 counterpart. 'It's the same game!' come the troll cries from the cheap seats and technically, they're not wrong. But it's this new way to play the same game, and the vastly improved presentation of the same game, that makes it feel like falling in love all over again.

Los Santos in 1080p is an incredible thing to behold, the city injected with more life thanks to new foliage, wildlife, weather effects and traffic and pedestrian density. You'll switch to a character to find them stuck in huge traffic jam (the temptation to get out of the car and take your frustration out on the tail-up with one well-placed grenade is often overwhelming); you'll fire up the game to see Blaine County wracked by a vicious and genuinely terrifying thunderstorm; you'll pull yourself out of wrecked cars after swerving violently to avoid deer, rabbits and even pet cats and dogs that dart across the road unexpectedly. *GTA* is all about those emergent gameplay moments, and the

new systems at work here make these even more varied and plentiful than ever.

If you play a lot of FPS games, you'll notice immediately that the first-person mode here feels somewhat sluggish compared to the genre's best. But the more you explore, the more the fact that this isn't a traditional FPS sinks in and the more it makes sense. Thousands of new animations make this new view option more than just a camera floating around the city, to the point that some people will likely find it a bit too much. Improved visuals and effects make brutal murders, violent crashes and fatal accidents really quite harrowing in a first-person

perspective – seeing through someone's eyes as they stumble and fall from a tall building while helplessly spinning, flailing and screaming turned our stomachs somewhat, making the idea of jumping out of helicopters and planes later in the game way more daunting than pressing Triangle has any right to be. Everything controversial you can do in the game becomes even more so when performed in first-person mode, which will inevitably lead to tabloid outrage and click-bait headlines suggesting that the game was developed by Satan himself.

With the original game, each character managed to coerce you into playing a

DETAILS

PUBLISHER
Rockstar

DEVELOPER
Rockstar North

RELEASE DATE
Out now

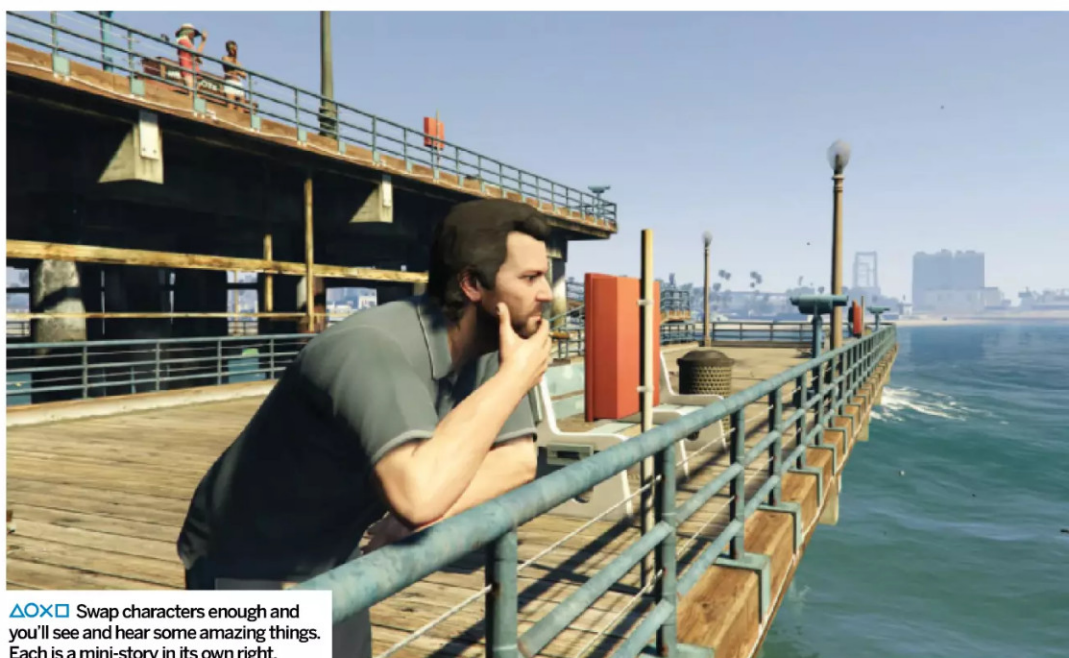
PRICE
£49.99

PLAYERS
1-30

AGE RATING
18+

TWITTER
@RockstarGames

Trophies 51



△×□ Swap characters enough and you'll see and hear some amazing things. Each is a mini-story in its own right.



“BRUTAL MURDERS AND VIOLENT CRASHES ARE QUITE HARROWING IN FIRST-PERSON MODE”



certain way – Michael's the professional, Franklin the gang-banger and Trevor the unhinged maniac – and without even thinking about it, we'd find ourselves lashing out at strangers with Trevor while being far more sensible with Michael than the other two. In first-person, there's a bit more of a connection between player and character and thus a disconnect with how they act in scripted moments and

ΔOXD Use the camera to snap the gorgeous new world? Please. It's all about offensive Trevor selfies.

how you behave as them, meaning you're more likely to develop one uniform play style across all three characters. It's more an observation than a criticism, especially when the classic third-person camera still exists if you prefer. You can even tweak the camera settings fairly extensively in the menus, creating your own hybrid system that jumps between the two viewpoints based on what you're doing, which is pretty neat. While cool from an immersion standpoint, first-person isn't always practical for gameplay, especially considering the feature has been retrofitted into a city that was never designed to be explored in this way.

You could virtually hear the old PS3 hardware creak and groan under the stress of running the game, but it's a whole lot tidier on PS4. Frame rate can still drop below 30 when things get hectic or when hitting top speed in a supercar, but it's generally far more stable – all the more impressive when you consider how much more there is going on at any one time. Pop-in, while not eliminated entirely, is far less frequent and noticeable for the most part. In fact, close-ups in general are both a strength and a weakness for this ambitious remaster, increased fidelity allowing you to fully drink in the ludicrous microscopic details in the environment but also exposing elements



of geometry and rendering that clearly weren't originally designed with this more powerful hardware in mind. While it may slip up from time to time when you bust out the magnifying glass, though, the spectacle and scale of Los Santos on PS4 is unparalleled and every inch you pull the camera back from the grubby street corners and winding wilderness trails, the more impressive it all gets.

It's the same great game, then, only with a wealth of additional content (including missions, weapons, side quests and over 150 new songs), graphical and mechanical improvements galore and even more to come down the line. *GTA Online*, its capacity now upped to 30 players, remains a curious and enjoyable alternative to running around as the story's trio of misfits, made even better by the ability to pick up where you left off if you've already been playing on PS3 or 360. After *The Last Of Us*, we should have been ready to be blown away two years running by *GTA*, but we really weren't. The new perspective and vast array of technical improvements make it feel like exploring a totally new yet familiar world, making it a dead easy recommendation whether you played on PS3 or not. An essential upgrade.

Luke Albigés

VERDICT

Improvements across the board make this the definitive version of one of the best games to ever grace PlayStation. Truly spectacular, and certainly worth buying and playing again.

97%



"THE FREEDOM OF THE GAMEPLAY WORKS WELL, AND FAR CRY 4 OFFERS THAT UP BY THE BUCKET-LOAD"



△×□ Sections in Shangri-La or on mind-altering drugs change the pace of the game quite nicely.



△×□ Sabal is one of the two potential leaders of the Golden Path, favouring tradition and culture over money.

Far Cry 4

Those things are endangered, you know



ALSO ON PS3

DETAILS

PUBLISHER
Ubisoft
DEVELOPER
Ubisoft Montreal
PSN PRICE
£54.99
PLAYERS
1-10
INSTALL SIZE
24.7 GB
AGE RATING
18
TWITTER
@FarCryGame

Trophies 51



THOSE POOR, POOR

animals of Kyrat. Forget Pagan Min and his regime of terror, the true menace is Ajay Ghale – the character you'll play – as you track all sorts of creatures throughout the fictional Tibetan country just to turn them into a wallet, a bigger pouch for explosives or a bumbag to carry any other Nineties heirlooms you might fancy bringing with you to the Tibetan mountains. Seriously, three full, pristine tiger skins for a single wallet? That's just excessive. But the desire to hunt beasts large and small to make your life in Kyrat that teeny tiny bit more comfortable is what makes *Far Cry 4* that oh-so-cruel and addictive. You monster.

If you've played *Far Cry 3* then already you're sold, no doubt; the location may have been swapped from a paradise island to the mountainous country of Kyrat, but the core gameplay remains almost completely the same. And that, of course, is all we could hope for. There are more things than ever to tick off whilst exploring the game's world, and while you'll certainly get that sense of familiarity as you race – Molotov cocktails at the ready – into an

outpost to capture it for the good guys, it still remains as fun as it ever was. There are more side missions to complete (with a great amount of variety to them), a larger selection of collectibles and some new weapons and vehicles for you to make use of. It is the freedom of the gameplay that works so well, and *Far Cry 4* offers that up by the bucket-load.

While graphically it might not compare to Ubisoft's own *Assassin's Creed: Unity* or the likes of *inFamous: Second Son*, the sheer expanse of landmass more than makes up for it. In fact, you'll likely want to spend more time dicking around in Kyrat than pursue the main story missions, so it's just as well everything is made available from almost the very start of the game. With that said, the story of *Far Cry 4* is perhaps not its strongest selling point; Vaas Montenegro of *Far Cry 3* was a very intimidating bad guy, but Pagan Min – well, he's much too *nice* to really be a threat. Despite the strong opening, Pagan Min remains benched for a large portion of the game, with much of his interactions being the omnipresent voice through your walkie-talkie. He doesn't present himself as the threat either a dictator or a game's



△×□ Hunting remains a large – and albeit unchanged – part of the game, but taking down rhinos is particularly difficult.



main antagonist should be. However, this is all made up with the addition of Sabal and Amita, two very different contenders for the leadership of the rebellion group, the Golden Path. You'll actually get to pick a side through some of the main story missions, and these decisions are tough enough to get you wondering whether the right decision has been made or not. It'll change the way a mission plays out, too, for example choosing either to protect an opium field or destroy it with as much fire as you can handle. It's a subtle thing, perhaps, but it's done in a compelling enough way that these choices do create a sense of importance. Of course, they're not so distinct that you'll want to play through a second time to experience the alternate version – *Mass Effect*, this is not – but they do help to drive the story quite a bit and give you something, other than taking on Pagan Min, to aim for.

The addition of co-op to the open world portion of the game is a huge boon, too, especially considering the PS4's SharePlay functionality. Admittedly, you can't take on the story missions while playing in co-op, and that is a shame,

but you can at least take on everything else Kyrat has to offer. The addition of a second player is, as you might expect, a considerable enhancement to everything you do and taking on fortresses (harder outposts, essentially) is a challenge you'll both find thrilling.

All things considered, *Far Cry 4* represents a fantastic package. You'll get a good 20 hours out of the game even if you don't hunt down every single icon that appears on the map. It might not have the same compelling story *Far Cry 3* had and, admittedly, it's not trying to mess with the formula in any real way, but if all you wanted was another slice of *Far Cry* then this is everything you hoped for.

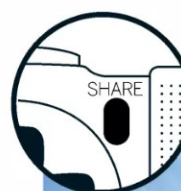
Adam Barnes

VERDICT

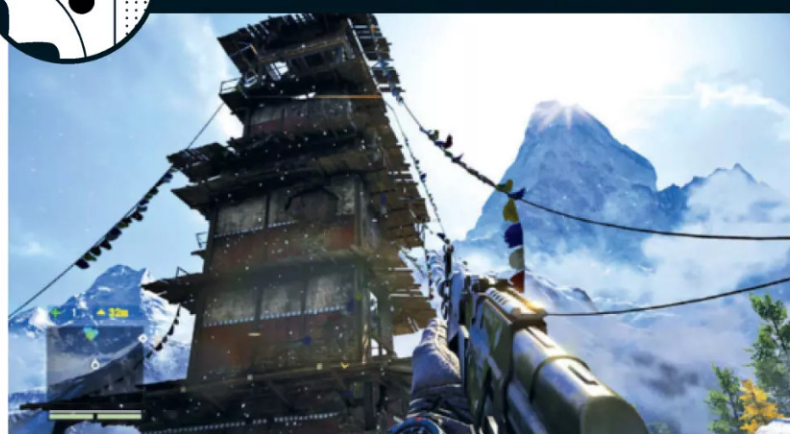
It's perhaps not as fresh as *Far Cry 3*, but it enhances the template in all the right ways. We'll want to see more from Ubisoft in the future, but for now, the open world freedom is enough to suffice.

80%

△×□ Flying around on the single seat helicopters, or Buzzers, is a great way of raining death from above.



PLAY CHALLENGE



SHARE THESE FEATS, IF YOU CAN...



NICE AND SLOW

△ TAKE ON A fortress at full strength without being detected a single time. Bring silenced weapons and lots of rocks.



X MARKS THE SPOT

□ LEAP OUT OF a Buzzer and glide onto the top of a Bell Tower; saves you messing about with all that climbing.

Beaten our trials? Let us know @PlayMag_UK!

LittleBigPlanet 3

I can tell that we are going to be friends



ALSO ON PS3

ACCIDENTALLY

BRINGING ABOUT the apocalypse, our hero has reached his low point. His powers diminished in the

face of this new, overwhelming threat to life itself, the fate of the universe still rests in his hands. It is time to call on a higher power. No, you're not reading a about a new grim fantasy series; this is *LittleBigPlanet 3*, and it's absolutely brilliant.

To save the Imagisphere from its impending doom, Sackboy can't go stag any more; he's got to find some friends. Enter Oddsock, Toggle, and Swoop. We've been seeing those three little chipper faces for a while now, and we thought we knew where we were at with them. We'll obviously be loving Oddsock the most, right? Oddsock, the little lolloping wall-running dog-thing. Look at him! Not only is he freaking adorable, but on a proper gaming level, his skills looks like they're by far the most tech. Now, while we're not going to deny that he's definitely awesome, and throwing his little socky body around levels is fun, we've seen it before in *Rayman Origins*. We're surprisingly much more into Toggle – his big body/small body switching ability is used incredibly well.

We were thinking it would be a somewhat tired mechanic of 'Oh, hey, a small space, guess I'll turn into the small version to go through it. Surprise, a heavy block to move,

now it's the big guy's turn,' and while there is a little of that, there are some much more inventive uses of it too, like momentum-based puzzles while you're in water – little Toggle is light enough to walk on water, while big Toggle sinks – we're expecting fine things from you lot with this in the level editor. That's not to say that we didn't get along with Swoop, but weirdly, he's the trickiest to get to grips with. You'd think he'd be the easiest, just soaring along through the levels like Aurora in *Child Of Light*, but he's more the flapping type. Gliding around smoothly only comes with his swooping ability, which can only be used when heading down, or down and up, and requires a little dexterity in the way that *LittleBigPlanet* hasn't really used before, but once it clicks, it feels great.

But you don't start with these guys right away – the point of the Adventure campaign is to unlock them. While that's initially disappointing, it's a pretty genius move, as starting off with Sackboy – fun as he is to still pad along with through the levels – makes it even more freeing and exciting when you get to be someone new. Still, to balance out the skills of his new friends, Sackboy collects five useful contraptions. While there's an obvious weak link in the form of a torch you shine on paintings to make them spit out stickers and such (yawn), the rest of them are brilliant fun. A gun that chucks balls at portals to access them, boots that give you



△×□ While it's obviously better with friends – where else can you cover your co-op buddy in stickers of dogs? – it's also great fun to play through solo.

a boost, a helmet for traversing cables... it's all inventive stuff that feels ace when you get to grips with it, and is a great way of giving the levels longevity. Every time you think that *LittleBigPlanet 3* has reached a point where it can't bring anything else out to play with, you get given a new device or unlock another friend to play with and master.

And that's what *LittleBigPlanet* is so good at. It's a genuine joy to bounce, swoop, and peg it across the levels, even more so when you're rewarded with a new way of doing so. It's not just the creativity of their layout – bouncing around platforms, figuring out the best way to get somewhere and having a smooth run feel great because so much stuff is happening – it's their depth and variation. The levels are incredibly beautiful, with the same kind of artistic cohesion of visuals and audio we've seen from the latest *Rayman* games, only much more detailed. There's a snowy Russia-inspired area that we travelled through, just taking in the paper butterflies, and twinkling ice, listening to electronic classical music. It's lovely. Combine this with complementary music for each level, and little surprises hidden around for those

DETAILS

PUBLISHER
SCE

DEVELOPER
Sumo Digital

PSN PRICE
£49.99

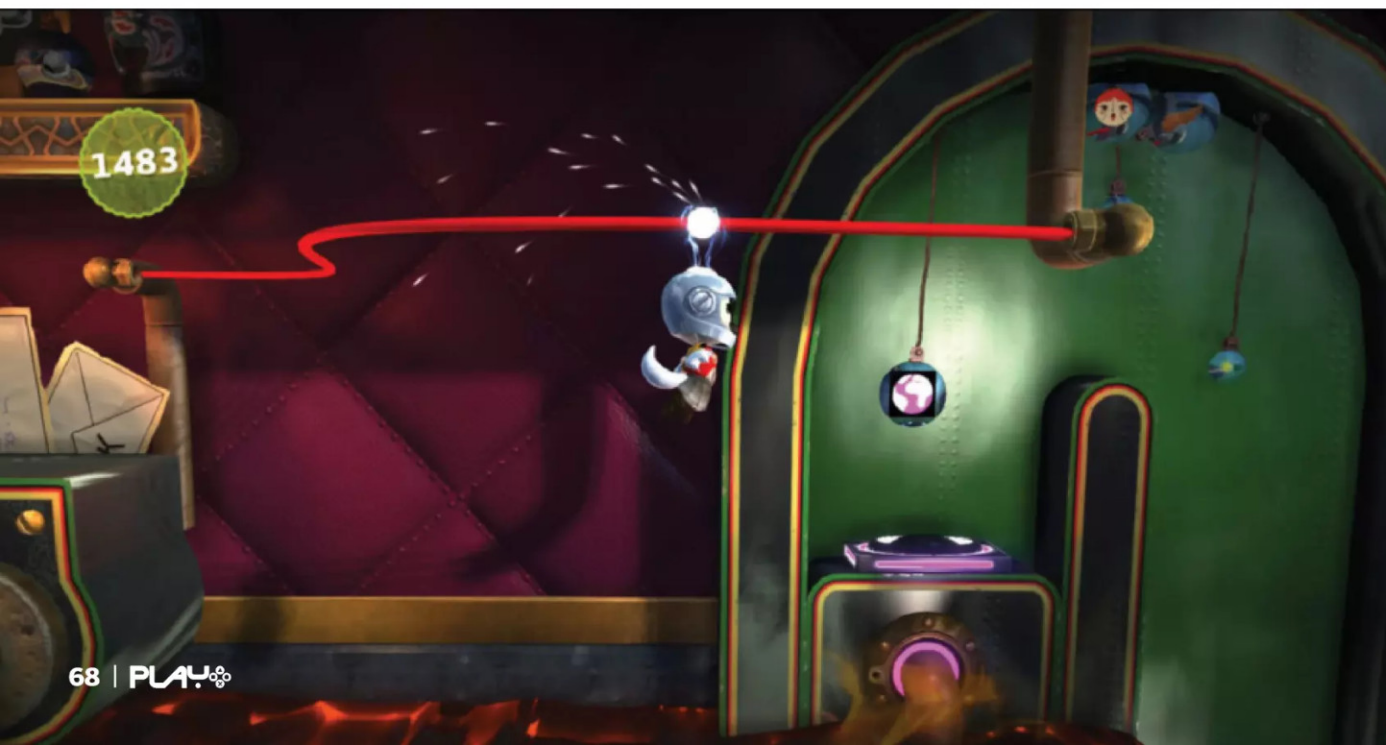
PLAYERS
1-4

INSTALL SIZE
11.4 GB

AGE RATING
7+

TWITTER
@littlebigplanet

Trophies 32





inclined to explore, and these worlds are just delightful, and very replayable due to the nature of unlocking new abilities to go back and explore them with. And if it seems like you don't get to use the Hook Hat enough, or that the Heroes' levels are woefully short, that's because as great as Adventure is, it's basically a series of fun demos to showcase what you can make yourself with the crazy amount of tools. Plus, there are like a squillion user-created levels available already.

But it's not all the best thing ever. Loading times are a drag on the action, especially when they come between short cutscenes, some of the characters are bloody infuriating to have to sit through, particularly if you're replaying some of the challenge rooms, and the lag on the menus are irritating. The hit detection on Toggle is a little wonky sometimes, and we'd like to be able to pick which character to be, instead of having set characters for the levels in Adventure mode. But that's pretty much it.

LittleBigPlanet 3 is trying so hard to be all things for all people, and we can honestly say that for the most part we think it's succeeded. Somehow it's landed on that

insanely difficult to find sweet spot. If you're a fan of single-player platformers, there are some decent challenges here, especially if you try and Ace the levels (not dying once – yeah, that's going to take you a good long while). If you prefer construction, that's still excellent, with engaging tutorial levels to work through that put your skills to the test to make sure you have the basics down. And if you're all about the co-op, the characters manage to balance well with one another, with the potentially game-breaking element of flight having its own set of rules to keep you from just zooming off and collecting all the things. It's engaging, so much fun, and bloody gorgeous.

Rebecca Richards

VERDICT

Learning several lessons from the previous two instalments, *LittleBigPlanet 3* has a very deep creative mode, an imaginative campaign, and plenty of longevity.

92%



Dragon Age: Inquisition

Nobody expected it, but it's really good



DETAILS

PUBLISHER
Electronic Arts

DEVELOPER
BioWare

PSN PRICE
£49.99

PLAYERS
1

INSTALL SIZE
40 GB

AGE RATING
18

TWITTER
@DragonAge

Trophies 51



IN A WAY that only grand fantasy RPGs can get away with, *Dragon Age Inquisition* takes around

15 hours to get going. Before then, the experience is an exercise in baby-stepped progression as one tutorial-focused, hand-holding quest rolls into the next. For anyone familiar with the genre, the effect is patronising at best; at worst, it's enough to make you want to stop playing.

Make it through the slow-motion trauma and a world of (mostly) authentic intrigue and comprehensive depth reveals itself. Even better is the fact that this world reacts to you in a manner that is more meaningful and believable than the vast majority of its genre peers. This is in itself enough to make you want to play all the way through until, tens of hours later, the finale ramps up the drama to levels that far exceed what this series has previously managed.

The degree to which you can influence the world and the outlook of its inhabitants makes sense within the context of your character. While everyone can customise their own preferred appearance, gender and race, what you can't alter is your place at the head of the Inquisition and the populace's

expectation that you will deliver them from evil.

Such biblical notions are apt; some people you meet quite literally believe that you have been sent from the heavens to save them. How you choose to react to such ideas causes your most trusted allies and advisors to think differently of you, these relationships organically evolving over time until certain individuals start to feel like lifelong friends. Gone are dialogue options that childishly signpost

"THE CHAIN REACTION OF YOUR BEHAVIOUR CAUSES THINGS TO BECOME ADDICTIVE IN THEIR DIVERSITY"

where a decision leads and how it will cause people to regard you. Instead, the narrative and its actors deliver their verdicts based on your moral stance – some will love how you act, others will hate it. The system blurs your future, lacing it with greater potential to shock and thrill in equal measure.

In other games you might refer to this as well-executed world building, but such a description feels shallow where *Inquisition* is concerned. Joy here comes

specifically from the sensation that the surroundings don't feel like a construct at all, at least not in a mechanical sense. Excuse the cliché, but what's on offer here genuinely feels sentient.

This perceived consciousness is mirrored in the player character, each decision layering upon the previous one to create a personality that you find yourself caring about and urging to succeed. Whether you decide to act for selfish or compassionate reasons, the

chain reaction of your behaviour causes things to become rather addictive in their diversity.

Less impressive is the combat and, more frustratingly, the overall visual approach. If you've played games of this ilk before – or seen the likes of *Game Of Thrones* or *Lord Of The Rings* – *Inquisition* feels familiar in a way that screams generic. It lacks creativity. Medieval RPG fans may not want things to stray too far from their pre-defined



ideas of how things should be, but to couple such towering interactive design with a palette of predictability comes as a disappointment.

While the act of fighting packs enough depth to provide a challenge (especially on harder difficulties), the variety and craftsmanship of your foes leaves a lot to be desired. Here, again, their design strays too far into conventional territory and long before you've finished you'll have had more than enough of giant spiders, tunic-garbed rogues and cloaked mages. While combat is testing enough to force you to engage in the majority of its options, you can't escape the feeling of déjà vu as fights regurgitate themselves time and again.

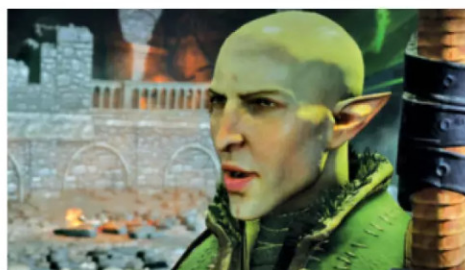
Still, the quality of the dialogue, the strength of the relationships and the adaptability of the wider environment make *Inquisition* an experience of lasting depth. It's a shame some of the more important details are so unsurprising and hackneyed, acting to tarnish and undermine the brilliant intentions and executions demonstrated elsewhere.

Despite these bothers, *Inquisition* is an RPG that is worth your time. It's one of those games that only offers its greatest rewards to those prepared to give up serious time to earn them though, so think twice if you're already short on spare hours.

John Robertson



PLAY CHALLENGE



TAC-CAM ELITE

△ CAN YOU USE the Tactical Camera to defeat a group of giant spiders on the game's 'Nightmare' difficulty?

SHOOTING STAR

□ RECORD YOURSELF COMPLETING an Astrarium mini game consisting of 10 or more stars in a single attempt.

Beaten our trials? Let us know @PlayMag_UK!

VERDICT

An exhaustive and impactful world, let down by predictable aesthetics and combat. The good elements make *Inquisition* worth playing, but the bad prevents it from reaching its full potential.

84%



Assassin's Creed: Rogue

Ubisoft keeps the Black Flag flying



DETAILS

PUBLISHER
Ubisoft

DEVELOPER
Ubisoft Sofia

PRICE
£49.99

PLAYERS
1

AGE RATING
18

INSTALL SIZE
6.5 GB

TWITTER
@assassinscreed

Trophies 47



THE LAST TWO games in Ubisoft's stealth-action series have seen big changes to the stalk-and-kill

formula that made it famous. *Assassin's Creed III* plucked players from the city streets and placed them in unfamiliar snowy forests, while *Black Flag* gave them a ship, the freedom of the seas, and the ask of forming a motley crew of pirates.

The lack of innovation in *Rogue*, therefore, can be a little jarring; it plays like a greatest hits album for the series so far. But if you can look past the stale edges, you'll find that every element is solid, and the 12-15 hour campaign that sees you switch allegiances from Assassin to Templar – a series first – offers a fresh perspective and ties up a few loose ends.

You play as Shay Patrick Cormac, initially a young Assassin recruit with an authority problem, as he sails, leaps, and stabs his way across the icy North Atlantic in the 18th Century. He soon grows uneasy at being sent to dispatch old, helpless Templars, and finally snaps when a mission to Lisbon goes awry, destroying the city. He leaves the Brotherhood, winding up in New York and eventually



EXCLUSIVE ANALYSIS
WATCH NOW ON YouTube
www.youtube.com/PlayMagUK

AOXO Naval combat is still ace. You'll keep enemy ships afloat just for the thrill of boarding and capturing the crew.



www.imagineshop.co.uk



△×□ Fans hoping for improved combat will be disappointed: patient counter attacks are still the way to go

becomes a Templar himself, conspiring against his old friends.

Shay's switch could've come off as gratuitous, but the sizeable build up to it makes it believable, and his journey keeps you interested despite uninteresting secondary characters. Having Templar allies is more than just a novelty, as it casts a morally grey shadow over the story of the previous games, making you think twice about past events.

The story is the only thing that's new here: Ubisoft have imported *Assassin's Creed IV's* gameplay almost wholesale, with a few tweaks giving an already polished game a slightly brighter shine. Naval combat stars again; picking off schooners with explosive shots or boarding ships twice your size is never dull, especially with your crew singing a jolly shanty as backing.

The environment provides further variety, as frozen water can block your way, and you can break up towering icebergs to create waves that sink smaller enemies. The *Black Flag* influence extends to solid land, too. You could lose hours hopping from island to island in your ship, The Morrigan, liberating assassin hideouts in New York, or scouring the North Atlantic for every last collectable.

Being a Templar means you're constantly looking over your shoulder for assassins lurking in bushes or on rooftops, waiting to claim your scalp. Having to deal with assassination attempts during missions is also a nice touch that means

that being a Templar feels like more than a simple re-skin.

That doesn't change the fact that, for the majority of the main quest, you'll be doing things you've done before in previous games such as leaping from rooftop to rooftop to track important targets, visiting a remote island to find an ancient relic and strategically destroying enemy gunships. With a lot of the

squeezed every last bit of juice out of our old friend. Load times drag on, but it's worth it for the views; while not technically superb, the skylines of New York and Albany provide a pleasing contrast to the snow-capped mountains in the distance.

While not as revolutionary as its predecessors, there's still a lot to like in *Rogue* such as solid mechanics, varied gameplay and hours of distractions. But

“ROGUE PLAYS LIKE A GREATEST HITS ALBUM FOR THE SERIES SO FAR”

gameplay lifted from previous titles, it's a shame Ubisoft still hasn't fixed some of the core issues: namely the boring combat and the occasionally wonky free running system. Sword fights are still 'press counter to win', while plotting the perfect route through the tree lines above guards' heads only to have your plans ruined when you accidentally jump into the middle of them thanks to poor controls is frustrating.

Ubisoft persists with the modern day storyline featuring Abstergo Entertainment, who call on you to relive Shay's memories to clean out the servers of the Animus – the device that lets people access memories through their DNA. Thankfully, these sequences are short and sharp: nothing more than a real-world excuse to explore colonial America.

This is the last *Assassin's Creed* we're likely to see on the PS3, and it has

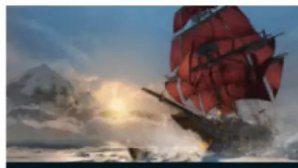
there's nothing to take your breath away, mainly because you've seen everything before – from the animations to the quests, and even the songs your ship's crew sings. Taken on its own, *Rogue* is a brilliant action game about one man's life turned upside down. But taken in context of the series as a whole, and bearing in mind the two games before it, you can't help but feel *Rogue* play things too safe.

Samuel Horti

VERDICT

Overall, *Rogue* feels a tad underwhelming. It's a sprawling, detailed sandbox and story that will hold your attention to the end, but it is lacking in terms of new content.

74%

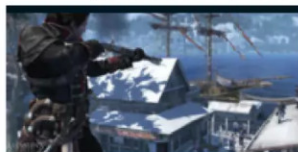


TROPHY CABINET



STALKER KILLER

Assassin attacks are inevitable, but by keeping an ear out for their tell-tale whispers you'll be one step ahead.



NINJA

The key to avoiding detection is careful planning. Use Eagle Vision and pick a path that stays well above the enemy

IN THIS SERIES

▲ **ASSASSIN'S CREED II** Ezio Auditore da Firenze's adventure starts in 15th Century Italy. Unlike *Rogue*, there's no sailing, but the combat and free running in the game's main cities are instantly recognisable.



Lords Of The Fallen

No souls, but it is quite dark...



DETAILS

PUBLISHER

Square Enix

DEVELOPER

CI Games/Deck 13 Interactive

PSN PRICE

£49.99

PLAYERS

1

AGE RATING

16+

TWITTER

@lortgame

Trophies 47



WHAT'S THAT SAYING

about imitation and flattery? *Lords Of The Fallen* isn't a shameless

imitation, but it certainly isn't just an homage either. There's no escaping the comparison, no escaping the influence. What *Lords* does, though, is take a marvellous template and adapt it. The template in question is the *Souls* series, and it's one of those things that should be faced head on rather than swept under the carpet; after all, it's unlikely that this game would exist if it weren't for From Software's brutal RPG series, and that would be a shame.

It would be a shame because this is a *good* game. Sure, it's unbalanced and some of the difficulty spikes take the piss, plus it boasts a horrible script and some equally horrible voice acting. Yet, despite its failures, there's a deep enough RPG here to really get your teeth into over time, with plenty of loot, upgrades and a vast New Game+ option that is actively encouraged during the game's loading screens.

Combat is strong, if a little slow, with attacks and blocking mapped in pretty much exactly the same way as in the *Souls* series. Casters (read: cowards) will love the Gauntlet, which may as well be a magic rifle that's bolted onto your

arm. This is where the game's promise of crushing difficulty comes tumbling down, as the Gauntlet fires a projectile that you'll have to rely on too much if you want to succeed. Upgrading your Faith stat increases its damage, and by attaching Runes – magical items that act as semi-permanent weapon buffs – to it, you make the thing even more OP. It isn't particularly inspiring, and scuppers more imaginative approaches to combat.

Still, there are other neat features. We've been guilty of mashing R1 when in a tight spot in the *Souls* series, only to be swiftly taken down a peg by an irritated aggressor. In *Lords*, a quick stab at L1

and your attack is cancelled entirely, again making the game a little easier, but also opening up some questions about how it could've been used in a PvP mode, which the game is sadly lacking. After all, cancelling attacks is common in many fighting games, so how tech would the *Souls*-style match-ups get in this game, when feints are available to you as well as guard breaks and back-stabs?

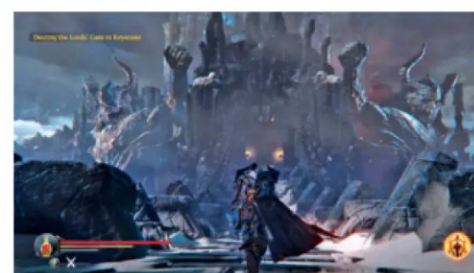
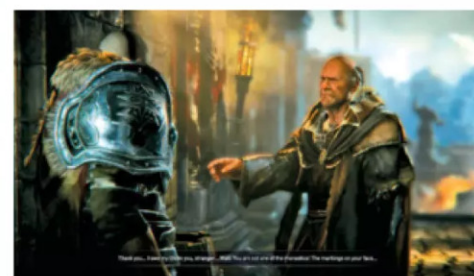
This feeling of missed PvP opportunity also applies to *Lords Of The Fallen*'s combo system, which is one of the biggest delights of the whole game and would've functioned just as elegantly in one-on-one (or gank squad) matchups

AOX There are three types of magic that you can tailor your build around.

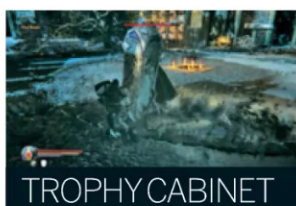




△×□ It looks like a *Souls* game and it plays like a *Souls* game but that isn't necessarily a bad thing. It's actually quite fun and fresh.



△×□ You might want to settle in for the long haul during the game's boss fights – their health bars are a little bit on the large side.



TROPHY CABINET
ALL IN
For this, you'll need to beat a boss with at least 20,000 unspent EXP. Try and get this early, as later it'll be more risky.



AGAINST ALL ODDS
Start a new game when you're confident and take on the First Warden. You shouldn't have much trouble after a few hours of experience. Easy!

as it does in the main game. Below your health gauge sits an Energy bar (what do you mean, Stamina?) that depletes while blocking and also while sprinting and swinging your weapon. Whenever you feel the urge to attack, by timing a follow-up attack perfectly you are rewarded with less Energy depletion. This means that timing three, four or even five attacks perfectly will only deplete as much Energy as one or two standard swings, allowing for long combos that are extremely useful.

The experience system is a little different too, and introduces a nice risk versus reward mechanic. XP can be banked so you don't lose it when you die, but if you're brave enough to hang onto it, each successive kill rewards you with more XP than normal, courtesy of a points modifier. It's an interesting idea, and it forces you to consider when you

level up more than many similar games we have played.

Boss fights aren't particularly inspiring in *Lords*. Some are fun, but the major problem lies with the massively over-inflated health pools that these creatures possess. Encounters can last 15 minutes or more – caution isn't just encouraged, it's completely necessary, and sullies the entire pace of the game. Boss fights should be short, sharp moments of live or die in games like these, something that upsets the status quo of methodically traversing a perilous area time and again. Instead, they become overlong, overhyped slogs that you won't want to repeat in a hurry.

This is symptomatic of the main issue with *Lords Of The Fallen* – it might be too ambitious. By trying to do something new with boss fights, the developer has damaged the pace of the game.

By trying to do something new with the Gauntlet, the developer has made the game easier and more prone to spamming than they might have hoped. By desperately trying to distance *Lords* from *Dark Souls*, the developer has drawn attention to how much better that game is than their own. But even so, *Lords Of The Fallen* emulates a brilliant template, and manages to *almost* live up to its sun-praising inspiration.

Steve Holmes

VERDICT

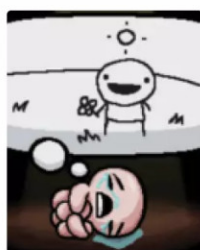
Lords is a solid and enjoyable action RPG, but suffers a little at the hands of over-ambition. Still, it's worth picking up and a solid way to pass the time until we get *The Witcher 3* and *Bloodborne*.

75%



The Binding Of Isaac: Rebirth

Baby's (Horrible) Day Out



DETAILS

PUBLISHER
Nicalis

DEVELOPER
In-house

RELEASE DATE
Out Now

PRICE
£11.99

PLAYERS
1-2

AGE RATING
6+

TWITTER
@EdmundMcMillenn

INSTALL SIZE
477MB

Trophies 59



ALSO ON VITA

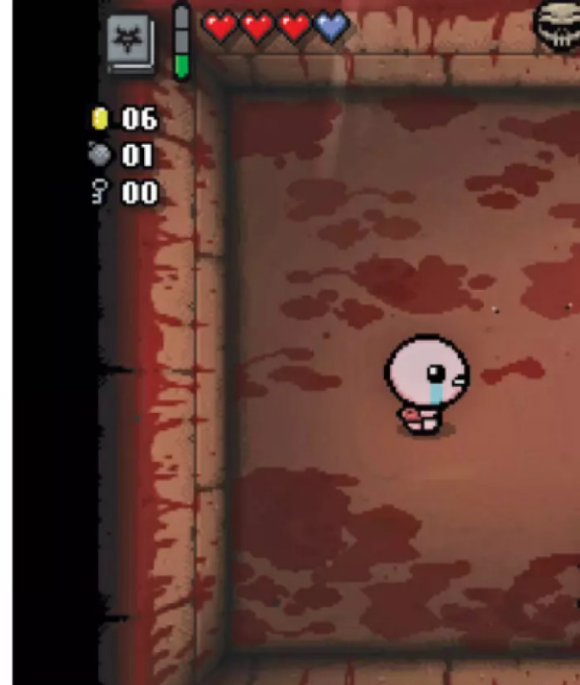
WE'VE PLAYED SOME
grim games in our time, but even the likes of *Dark Souls* and *The Walking Dead* look positively

sunny when sat next to *The Binding Of Isaac* – a truly horrible dungeon crawl starring a naked baby who just can't catch a break. Marked for death by a lunatic mother who believes his murder is God's will, poor little Isaac escapes to the nightmare basement that inexplicably sprawls beneath his bedroom and must make use of the sick and twisted 'upgrades' littered in the poop-soaked depths to survive. Yeah... it's not a nice game but for some freak reason, it's also incredibly tough to tear yourself from Isaac's ordeal.

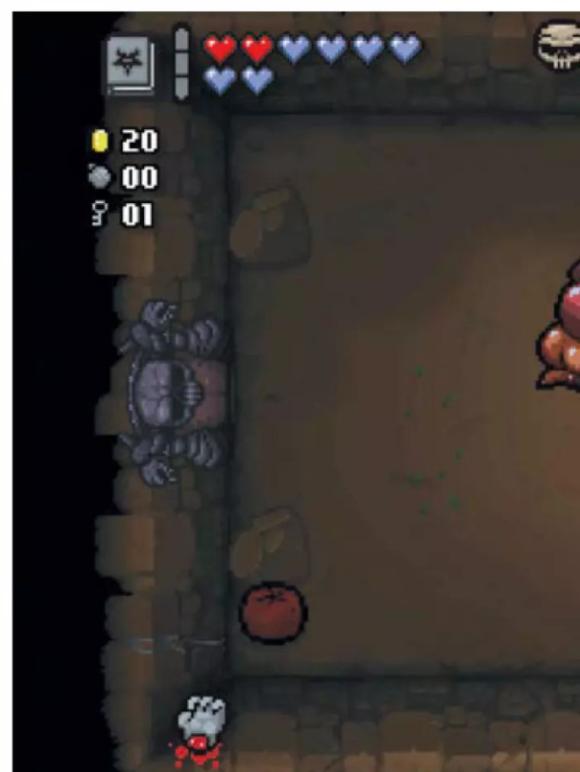
Part of the charm (in as much as a game this dark can be said to have charm, anyway) is the clever procedural generation that ensures no two trips to the basement are the same unless you want them to be. Just as in similarly created games like *Spelunky* and *Rogue Legacy*, there's potential to stumble into danger far earlier than

you'd normally expect, or to hit payday and bag a host of powerful weapons before you even reach the first boss. Having struggled for several hours to reach the dungeon's deepest levels, for instance, one lucky run left us with revoltingly powerful weapons, a small army of disgusting minions and nine lives, which was more than enough to assure victory. Such luck is rare, though, and for every soaring run like that, you're looking at a good ten times as many when a good start comes crashing down around you after one too many pills or pacts, or a terrible start makes crazy skills the only way to get to the good stuff hidden away later on.

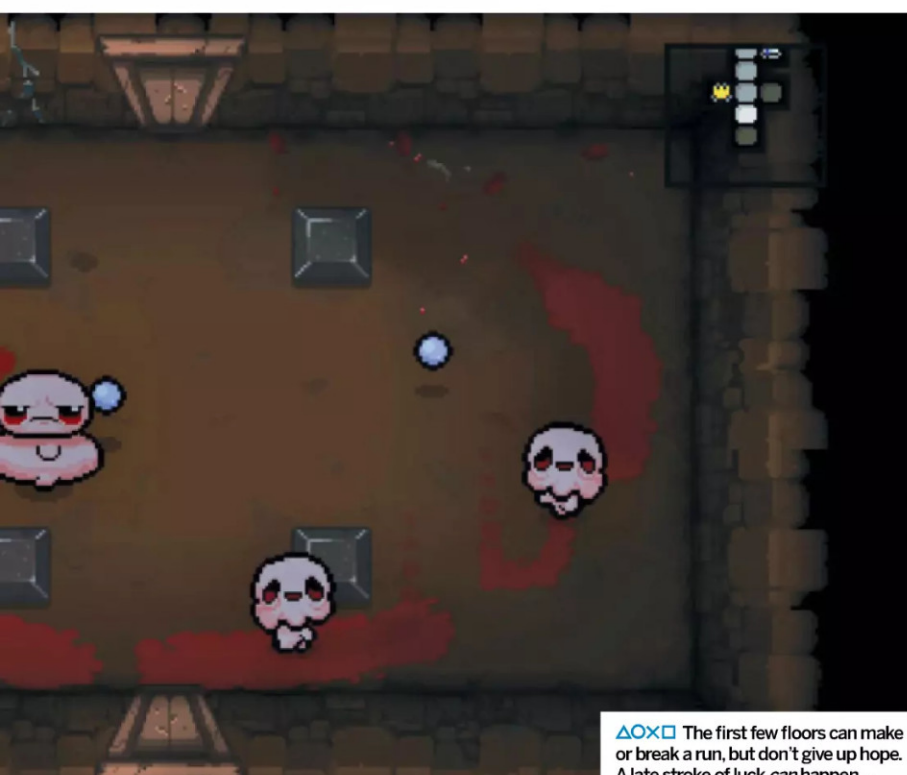
There are literally pages of different collectibles, each generally altering your appearance in some way as well as changing up how your weapons (which are primarily your own tears, obviously) function. The coolest part of this, though, is that many of these perks and abilities stack, making every combination handle differently. Eye lasers that zig-zag about the screen, swirling tornados that detonate on impact, shots that coat the target in debuffs... you'll happen upon the coolest combos purely by accident and it's unlikely that you'll see them again for a long time with so many possibilities from the off and even more unlocked as you continue to delve deeper into the darkness. In addition to weapon mods, there are all kinds of curious consumables hidden in the dungeons – unidentified pills to pop, miscellaneous cards to collect and rechargeable super weapons, all of which need to be bravely tested in order



△×□ Bosses are randomized at the end of each stage, but can also appear in particularly tough rooms in the dungeons themselves.



△×□ Each unlockable character has their own unique traits and gimmicks. Try them all out and see who you like best.



△○×□ The first few floors can make or break a run, but don't give up hope. A late stroke of luck can happen...



to work out what they actually do. And even then, it isn't always clear whether they help or hinder. Don't expect anything to be obvious, basically.

Given how much of an emphasis there is on random generation and placement, it should come as little surprise that *The Binding Of Isaac* is freaking difficult.

Outside of the occasional God Mode run like the one we mentioned earlier, your skills will constantly be tested both in terms of evasion and shot placement. Kiting aggressive enemies around obstacles is key, as is positioning yourself to bait certain boss attacks that are easier to evade, but motion also plays a part in firing as well. Four-directional fire feels limited at first after enjoying several generations of twin-stick shooters, but you'll soon learn that shots can be bent and angled slightly by loosing them while moving in a particular way. Patient use of this (along with a handful of other tricks) can make your starting few hearts go much further – rushing is practically suicide, as a few missed health or weapon upgrades is all it takes to promote later bosses from challenging opponents into nigh-invincible bastards made out of blood and shit. Because pretty much everything in *The Binding Of Isaac* is.

We didn't imagine we'd be slapping a title like 'The Shittiest Game On PS4' on something we enjoy so much, but it's literally true – there are rooms where you simply can't move because they're crammed with turds, while

many enemies and bosses attack with their own excrement. If it isn't that, it's blood and organs. This is about as vile and tasteless as games get, and that's oddly refreshing in this day and age. While developers are often reluctant to include children or animals for fear of tabloid outrage when players attack

“REBIRTH IS THE VERY ANTITHESIS OF CAUTIOUS DESIGN”

them, *Rebirth* is the very antithesis of cautious design – a game where a naked baby gets jacked up on all kinds of drugs, wears the corpses of animals and cries demons to death before they can drown him in their tainted fluids. Cue outrage from the usual suspects.

Between the near endless replayability, though, and the seed codes that allow you to repeat particularly enjoyable runs, share impossible ones with friends or even alter the game on fundamental levels with special codes, the abject horror will keep dragging you back to the basement for one more run. And another. And another. That poor kid...

Luke Albigés

VERDICT

Who would've thought a game so grim would be so enthralling? Well, it worked out pretty well for *Dark Souls*, and Isaac's adventure is as addictive as it is gross. As in, extremely.

90%

REVIEW ROUND-UP

CONSIDERING THE WHOLE 'Vita has no games' meme that followed on from the equally hilarious 'PS3 has no games' one, we're amazed by the number of players we meet who tell us that their Vita memory cards are full. We're in the same boat, to be honest – we agonised over what to get rid of in order to install **FREEDOM WARS** [A] and actually, losing *Ragnarok Odyssey Ace* probably wasn't the worst thing in the world. Hey, we still have *Soul Sacrifice Delta*, which is just as well because *Freedom Wars* doesn't nearly scratch the *Monster Hunter* itch as we were hoping it would.

There are elements that are familiar, from the four-player co-op to the mission structure to the art of crafting new gear. But whether down to a conscious move to try and appeal to the western audience, or simply through trying to carve a niche for the game, Sony's offering is more a blend of the portable hunting formula and cover shooter mechanics. It's unique, to be sure, and those of you who aren't simply looking

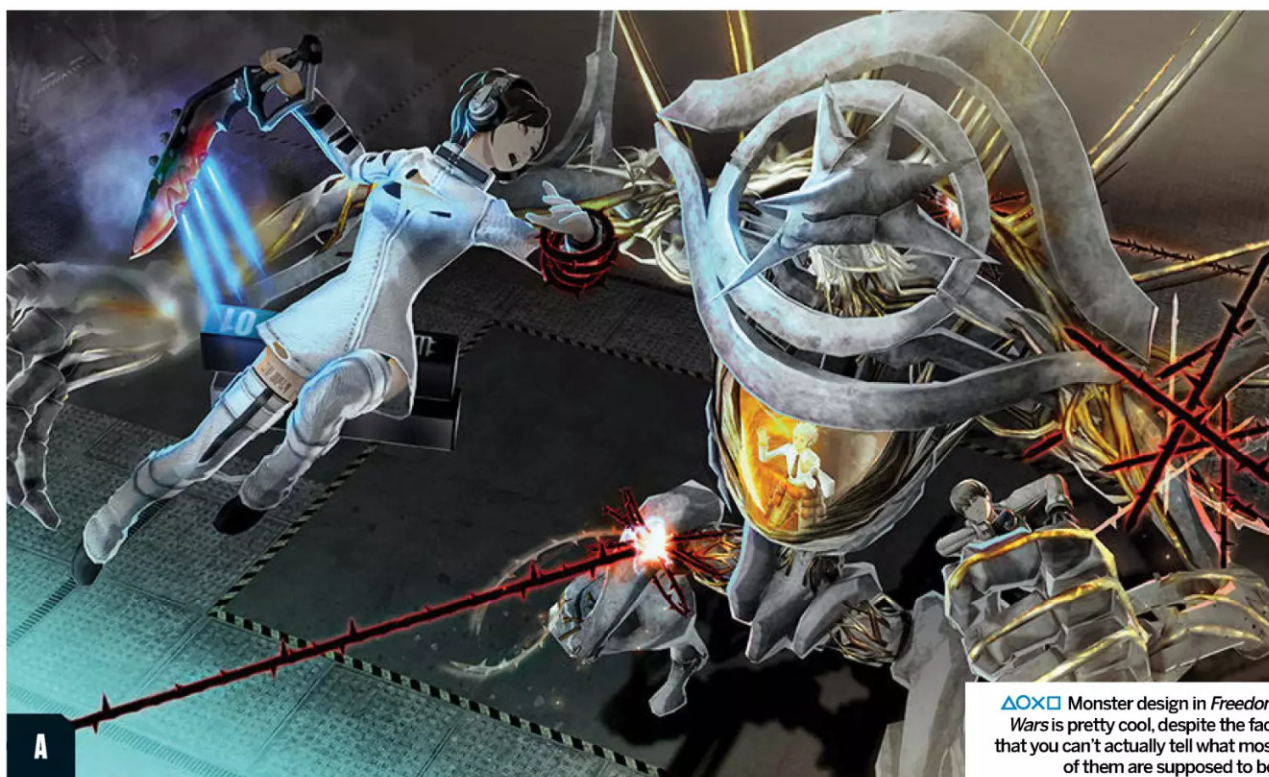
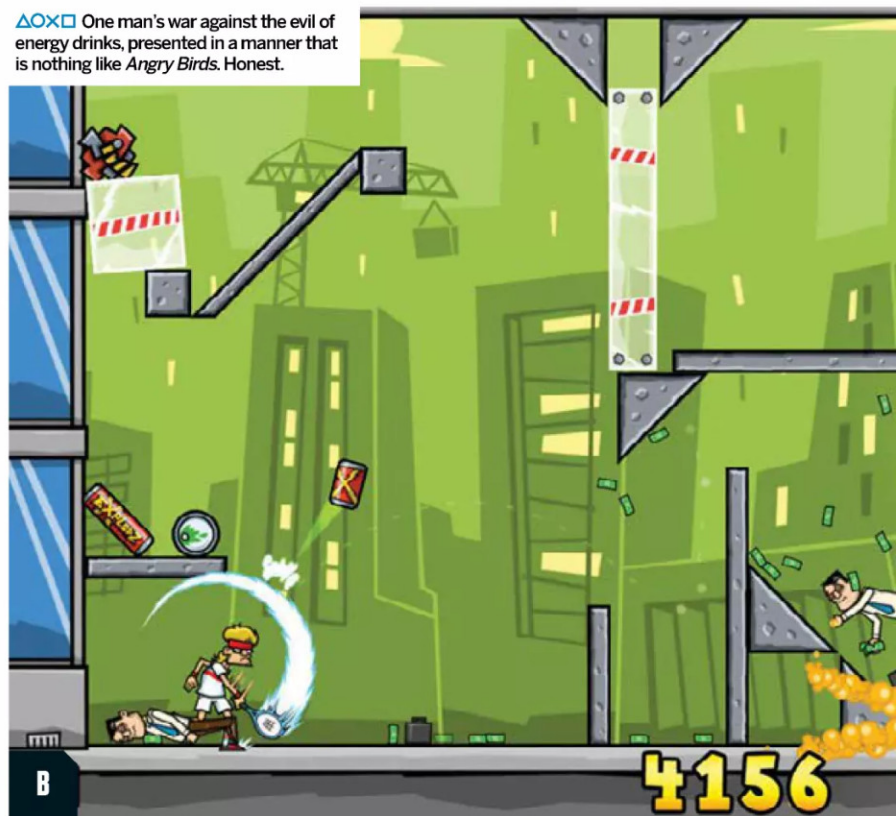
to fill a Rathalos-shaped hole will likely enjoy it – the game looks amazing and content-wise, there's absolutely loads to see and do once you manage to grind through the slow start and myriad mechanics to learn. We'll be putting more time in when we can, since the universe and design are both awesome, but we can't help but feel that fans at either extreme of the spectrum this hybrid works on already have games that better suit their needs. It's a complex beast, but fortunately, not all games are quite so tricky to define.

“NEVER ALONE IS WHITE-AND-BLACK TO LIMBO'S BLACK-AND-WHITE, ITS POLAR OPPOSITE IN TERMS OF TONE AND PALETTE”

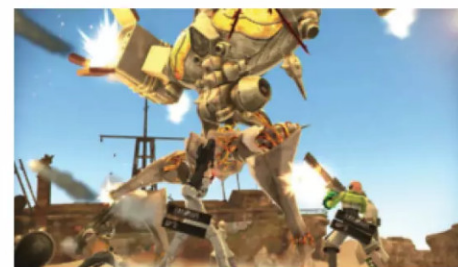
TENNIS IN THE FACE [B] is *Angry Birds*, only with tennis instead of birds. See? It's that easy. Technically, sure, that would make it 'Angry Tennis', but that's effectively what it is so it's fine. Your grimacing,

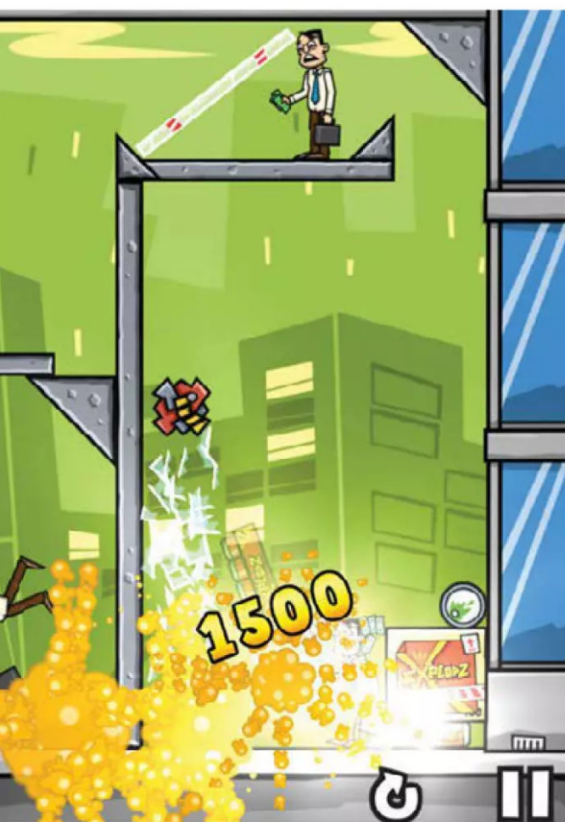
headband-rocking hero is so mad at the energy drink that cost him his career that he must hit impossibly bouncy tennis balls at a sequence of living targets (which have faces, hence the title) to try and bring them all down in as few shots as possible. That's it. Aim your shot, fire away and hope chaos theory is on your side when the explosions go off. It's a concept far better suited to a throwaway mobile game (which is where it started) than something to play on the same console that can run *GTA* and *The Last Of Us*, but that somehow doesn't stop it being oddly compelling – as in games like the majestic *Peggle*, a fluky screen-clearing shot can feel like a huge personal achievement, even though all you did was placed a cursor, hoped for the best and pressed X. Then celebrated. For some reason.

△×□ One man's war against the evil of energy drinks, presented in a manner that is nothing like *Angry Birds*. Honest.



△×□ Monster design in *Freedom Wars* is pretty cool, despite the fact that you can't actually tell what most of them are supposed to be.





Such luck won't get you through the harsh musical world of **SENTRAN KAGURA: BON APPÉTIT!** [C], as you'll need mad rhythm action skills to make it through the toughest tracks on even Normal difficulty. This spin-off sees the cast of the series thrown into a cooking battle that even the narrative can't be bothered to properly explain in some cases (to be fair, the amusing localisation is knowingly playful with the whole thing) with one song per character to master in order to forge your path to culinary victory.

Between a script that packs more double entendres than a *Carry On* box set and the gratuitous clothesplosions that accompany a perfect verse, it's hardly what you might call progressive. But with Harmonix still in bed with the enemy (for now... roll on *Amplitude*) and Neversoft sleeping with the real big fishes, the fact that most of the coarse stuff can be skipped means that starving rhythm action fans are still able to enjoy the musical aspect of the game even if they don't necessarily agree with its principles. We're not even sure it has any, but whatever. This is a freaking minefield.



There's pretty much no way to jump from that to a game designed to inform players about Inuit culture, but we just did. Take that, logic (which is very different to *Take That* logic, where you feel compelled to sing and dance whenever it rains). **NEVER ALONE** [D] takes the form of a beautiful 2D platformer and casts a young Inupiat girl and a snow fox as its lead characters, allowing free switching between the two or co-op play depending on what you prefer. It's not the most mechanically robust game we've ever played but it is among the most touching, thanks in no small part to the short documentary videos unlocked as you play that explain everything from the society portrayed to the lore retold. Gorgeous and moving, *Never Alone* is white-and-black to *Limbo*'s black-and-white, both in terms of tone and palette,

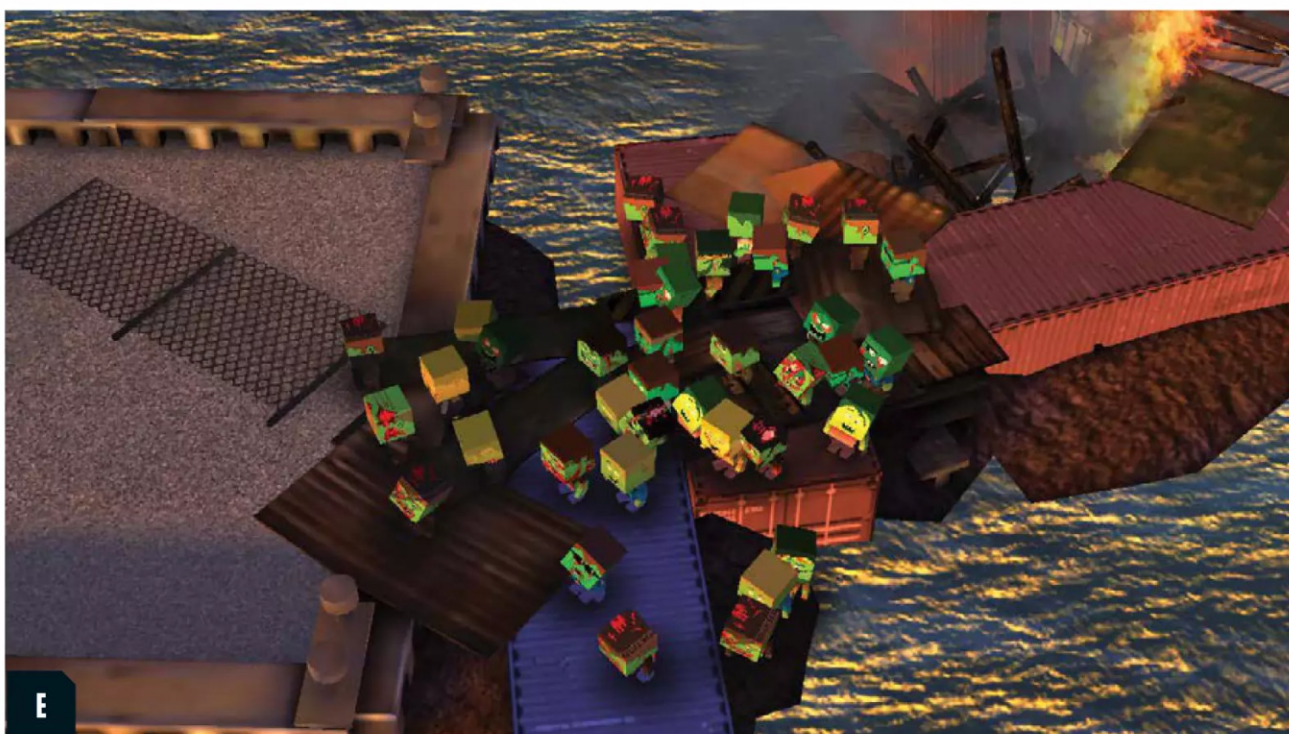


△○×□ The harsh conditions of the Arctic make for superb set pieces, and storytelling is beautifully handled.

an uplifting tale of hope rather than despair. And while the adventure is short, it's one you're unlikely to forget any time soon.

We say that, but the loading times of **THE HUNGRY HORDE** [E] are so epic that they make it possible to learn, unlearn and relearn all worldly knowledge before you even get back into what should be a quick-fire game. We exaggerate, obviously (even *ModNation Racers* wasn't quite that bad) but the point stands – *The Hungry Horde*'s load times are atrocious, especially for what is supposed to be a score attack game. We get that learning routes, methods and techniques is key to success, but doing so is a chore based purely on downtime. Gameplay itself is actually pretty enjoyable on account of having so much going on and the breakneck pace sure as hell keeps you on your toes. But with such a time barrier presented at the end of each run, you're more likely to just quit out than bother to try again. Never mind – it was free anyway, eh?

△○×□ Eat people, get more zombies, eat more people, get even more zombies. That's pretty much all you need to know here...





PUBLISHER 2K GAMES

DEVELOPER YAGER

FORMAT PLAYSTATION 3

RELEASE DATE 29 JUNE 2012

PLAY SCORE 59%

METACRITIC SCORE 77/100

The Making Of... SPEC OPS: THE LINE

Not all classics are born equal. Some changed the gaming world, while others were destined for far more low-key success – games with something to say that were largely misunderstood on release. Ed Smith returns to one of the best examples of the latter from the entire PS3 generation



Spec Ops: The Line launched June 2012, seven months after the last *Call of Duty*, five months before the next one. Yager didn't select the spring release window to make a point, but still, it had a certain poetry. In a climate of shooters that were leaning heavily towards the political right, *Spec Ops* stood firmly in the middle, casting a cynical eye over the war games that had come before it and the ones set to come after. It was an incredibly violent game, packed with slick gunplay and gore effects that would ingratiate it towards common shooter fans. But at the same time, it was salted with cutting cultural commentary. "We enjoy killing in games," it seemed to say. "But what does it reflect about us and our morality?"

Walt Williams was *Spec Ops*' writer. His script was a nuanced evaluation of how videogames treated violence. "I'm not saying triple-A games are bad," he tells us. "They're not. There are amazing studios making amazing games in the triple-A space. And I don't want to give up on triple-A. Yes, I can say 'I want to see less violent, more hopeful triple-A games' but I can't just expect it to happen. War will always exist. That's an unfortunate truth."

"At the same time, there is so much more we could be doing. War will always exist, but I see no need to glamourise it. There's no reason for us to focus solely on recreating the violent world in which we live, when we could also be creating the world we want to live in. If we want to believe that games now occupy a place of cultural importance, then we need to accept responsibility for what that entails."

Williams worked on the script for *Spec Ops* for over four years, constantly updating and finessing it in conjunction with the game's central cast: Nolan North, Chris Reid, Omid Abtahi and Bruce Boxleitner. Though it's commonly thought of as an anti-violence, anti-war game piece of almost propaganda, Williams' intention with *Spec Ops*' story





△OX△ A war game telling you war is bad might seem hypocritical, but Yager's message and delivery are solid.



was to present how often, in dire situations, the decision to commit atrocities is made for people – how there are no trite answers to the question of war.

The famous white phosphorus scene, in which player character Walker drops chemical weapons on what he believes to be a squad of enemies, but which turns out to be a refugee camp, is the centrepiece of both *Spec Ops* and

and yet had access to a weapon, ethical or not, which could potentially turn the tide in their favour. The key part, which players may not take into consideration when playing a videogame, is that to the characters, this is a life or death situation with no second chances. If Walker and his squad die, they don't get to restart and try again. The core of that scene is in the two lines between Walker and Lugo, said right

before the player takes control of the mortar's aiming camera. Lugo says, 'There's always a choice,' to which Walker responds, 'No. There's really not.'

“IN GAMES, WE LIKE TO THINK THAT WE ARE THE MASTERS OF OUR OWN DESTINY”

Williams' narrative ambitions. This sequence in particular was debated at Yager for a long time.

"There was a lot of discussion about this," Williams says. "We talked about whether or not there should have been a choice to use the mortar. The thing is, the scene was written from the POV of Walker and his squad – three soldiers who were grossly outnumbered, had a limited amount of ammo,

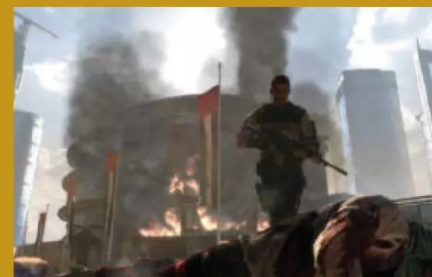
"The point we wanted to make was that bad things happen and they are not necessarily anyone's fault. In games, we like to think we are the masters of our own destiny, that we can actively choose between right and wrong and that the universe will abide by our choice. But in real life, that's not the case. Was Walker to blame for his actions? Yes, absolutely. Were his actions actively malicious?

BLUFFER'S GUIDE

Everything you need to know in five facts



1 Violent, dark third-person shooter from the guys producing *Dead Island 2*



2 Yager takes aim at violent games by showing the real consequences of these actions



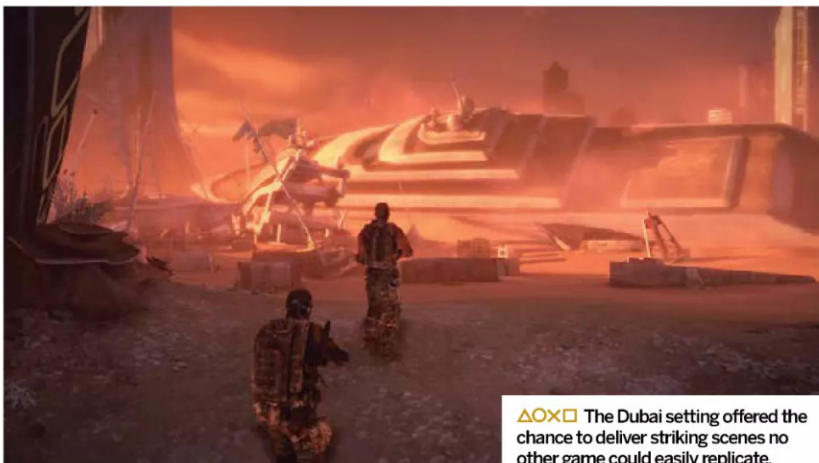
3 It's set in Dubai, with the unique ability to weaponise the swirling sands of the desert



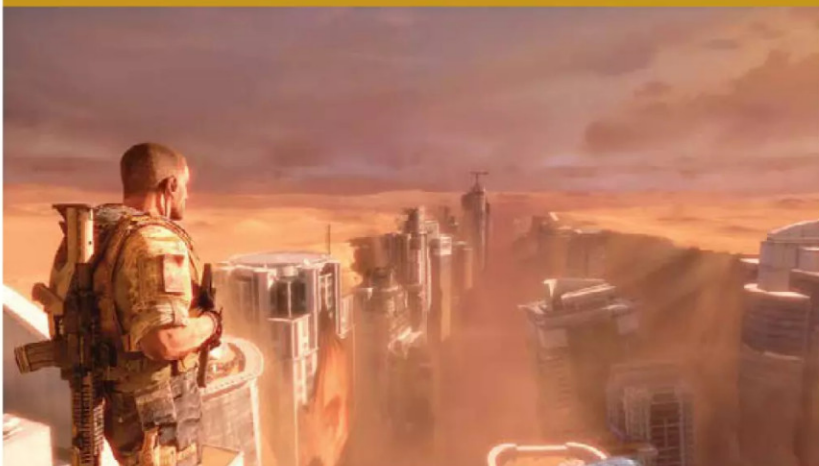
4 The script was written by Walt Williams, story consultant on *Mafia 2* and *BioShock 2*



5 *Spec Ops: The Line* later became the subject of a book entitled *Killing Is Harmless*



STANDOUT MOMENT



KNOW YOUR ENEMY

Warning: spoilers ahead!

The scene where Walker and squad drop white phosphorus on a group of refugees is *Spec Ops*' most talked about moment, but for our money the key moment comes later in the game, when Walker, battered and bruised, finally arrives at the headquarters of his nemesis Colonel Konrad. He's greeted at the door by a group of ten or so soldiers. They explain that

they are the only ones left alive, and that they've chosen to surrender rather than try to fight Walker any further. It's a surreal, disturbing moment, where the game confronts you with the fact that you've managed to kill not just a bunch of nameless baddies, but an entire platoon of American soldiers. You're the monster now. This once overwhelming force is terrified of you.

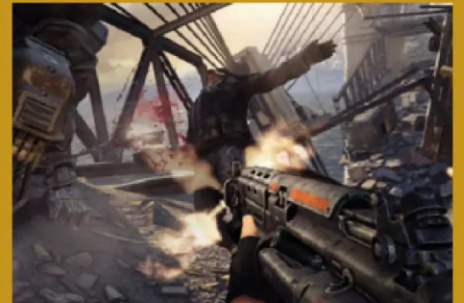


FURTHER READING



OLDER – Haze

For all its technical faults, Free Radical's oft-maligned first-person shooter attempted to portray war as brutal and idiotic. The soldier you play is forcefully administered drugs to make him think his actions are heroic.



NEWER – Wolfenstein: The New Order

It might seem like a knockabout sci-fi game, but *Wolfenstein*'s cast of tired, emaciated characters lends it a melancholic tone. Throughout the game, you're forced to witness some truly horrible violence.

No, they were the actions of a desperate man. That was the crux of this scene. The world does not revolve around our desires. We don't get to be the hero just because we want to be. If we are careless in our day-to-day lives, we are capable of causing unintentional collateral damage."

In the two years since its release, *Spec Ops* has been referred to as a game that is anti-war and a game that is hypocritical. Reviewers found it hard to square the games' scenes of intricately designed violence with its ostensible humanist message. But this was always the point. Williams and Yager didn't want to pick a side so much as illustrate how the pressures of war force people to do bad things. *Spec Ops* wasn't anti-*Call Of Duty*. It occupied a cynical middle-ground – it argued that the violence players committed in war shooters, like a lot of violence in real-life, was the result of circumstance and external pressure.

Getting all of this right meant a lot of work. The four-plus years Williams spent on the script involved a lot of communication with Yager's designers. "The story was all developed in tandem," says Williams. "Though, in a way, the

mechanics came first, in that we knew from the start we were making a third-person, squad-based, military shooter. Right from the beginning, we knew we wanted to explore a more emotionally realistic combat experience, but it was through working with the original mechanics that the crux of the story – denial, madness, the foolish connection between violence and heroism – became very clear in our eyes. In truth, the final version of *Spec Ops*' story was ultimately inspired by the act of developing a military shooter and examining the gameplay that came with it."

As well as its story, Yager also wanted the setting of *Spec Ops* to stand out. Dubai, a city which today comprises skyscrapers and tourist attractions, but in 1991 was little more than desert, was selected to reflect Western influence on the Middle East. A wealthy, artificial place, it symbolises once again the corruptive effects of American foreign intervention.

"Right from the start, Yager wanted to use Dubai as the setting," says Williams. "In one way, it was a location that had not yet been explored in a videogame, so it certainly lent an original environment to



the world. But also, at the time, the city had not come to prominence globally. That gave it an almost mysterious quality. It allowed us to show a different side of the Middle East than people usually associate with military conflicts."

The Dubai of *Spec Ops* was as pretty and pristine as in real-life, only much of it had been ravaged by sandstorms, destroyed and laid bare. Just as the violence was never meant to be black and white (Walker and his team are just trying their best), this was a city that had strived to become something bigger and wealthier, than its Middle-Eastern contemporaries, but in the process had

because everybody working on it had the same ambitions. In triple-A development, where a creative team might comprise upwards of 200 people, that kind of cohesion is incredibly rare today, and it really shone through.

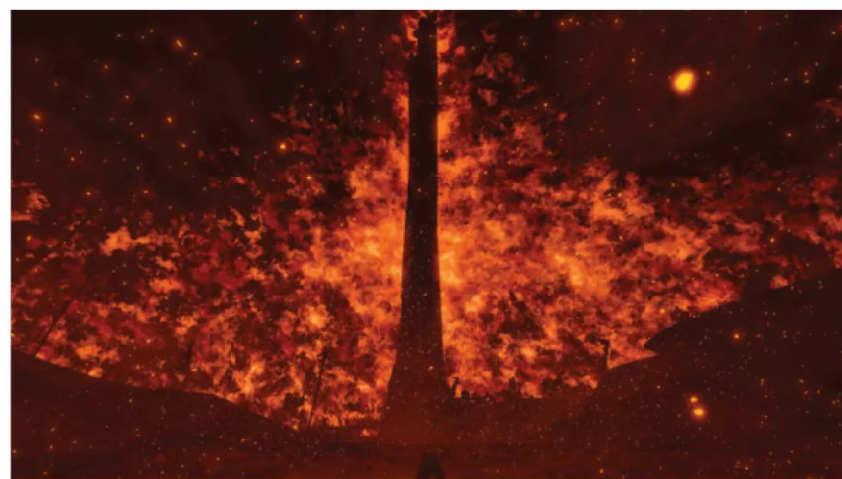
Still, despite all of his work, Williams is unsure whether *Spec Ops* truly made a difference. "It certainly had something to say about violent games, and it affected the people who played it, but I don't know that anyone has stopped playing violent games or military shooters after having played *Spec Ops*, or that military shooters have grown more self-aware since *Spec Ops* was released. Still, what we hoped

"THE WORLD DOES NOT REVOLVE AROUND OUR DESIRES. WE DON'T GET TO BE THE HERO JUST BECAUSE WE WANT TO BE"

become opulent and was now being reminded of what it truly was.

This kind of cohesion ran right through the development of *Spec Ops: The Line*. Nothing was created in a vacuum. Every decision by the design team was discussed with the writers, and vice versa. If it succeeded in raising questions about violence in games, and in real life, it was

for was that *Spec Ops* would inspire more people to try different things in the triple-A space and I think players and journalists are calling now for mainstream games that allow them to express themselves without resorting to violence. I think it showed we can discuss violence in triple-A games in a mature manner."



BOMB TRACKS

Licensed music used to great effect

Spec Ops: The Line features a lot of licensed music, from Deep Purple to Alice in Chains, but nothing stand outs like Jimi Hendrix's version of *The Star-Spangled Banner*, which drones lazily over the game's main menu. This wailing, screeching version of the US national anthem reflects how the ideal of clean, American military heroes is twisted, and how patriotism, when looked at differently, can seem very ugly indeed.



Williams has now left game development and is working on a novel. But the war shooter genre, or at least how people feel about it, is changing. *Call Of Duty: Ghosts* picked up mostly middling review scores, *Battlefield* has fallen out of favour (if largely due to its dodgy online) and many studios are taking the fight to the future to avoid modern combat. *Spec Ops* was a solid shooter, which raised questions about violence. It was forceful in places, but it never explicitly told people to stop playing war games. Williams and Yager stated their case and left players to make up their own minds. Two years later, it seems like some may have listened.

"It was a long, emotional, often combative project to make," concludes Williams. "But when the dust had settled, we had all been through the journey together. Many lasting friendships were made. Not a week goes by where I don't think about them."

INTERVIEW

REVIVING DRAGON AGE

Creative director Mike Laidlaw talks us through how BioWare designed, built and presented *Inquisition*'s enormous world

With *Inquisition* being the first *Dragon Age* on PlayStation 4, do you see this as a new beginning for the series or is this still very much a sequel to the two previous games?

We strove to make it fairly accessible to new players, that's for sure. I think there's a lot of extra context and depth that returning players will pick up on, but our big goal while designing it was to make sure that new players always knew what was happening and what they should be doing next.

We didn't want new players to feel as though they're being shadowed by a mountain of legend and history from the previous games. Instead, we wanted the lore to come out in commentary through books and such that you can find around the world.

For returning players, the big thing *Inquisition* does is set 'play' as a core priority. BioWare has tended to focus on story and emotional engagement and we are still very much a narrative company... we have four editors and a team of ten writers, which gives you a sense

of how importantly we take narrative. What we don't want, though, is narrative beat followed by narrative beat, which is why *Inquisition* gives you a big block of narrative and then asks you to decide how to act. That's something BioWare wants to get back to; that sense of wonder and providing elemental gameplay that has stories weaved in and around it.

You say that's something BioWare 'wants to get back to'. Has the studio abandoned that in the recent past?

Yeah, I think so. While we've had good gameplay recently, what we've had less of is pure player-driven freedom. I think the move to the Frostbite engine and the technological jump towards an engine that can do big spaces had a big impact on what we could achieve on that front.

Prior to Frostbite we simply couldn't do areas as large [as they are in *Inquisition*], we couldn't do a line of hills that obscured things in the distance and we couldn't have you wind your way through a canyon that opens into

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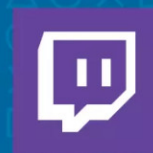
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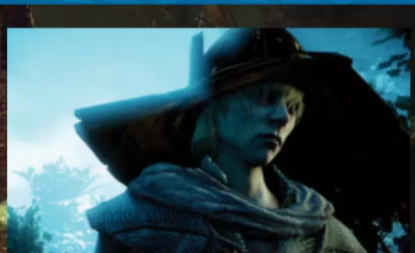
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a desert. The kinds of feelings you get when playing a game that offers that sort of thing is very powerful.

Similarly, we want to be able to provide gameplay that you can share and discuss with your friends without spoiling the story. In *Dragon Age Origins* and *Dragon Age II*, every piece of gameplay you could possibly explain was wrapped in a thick narrative web that you couldn't talk about because it would ruin it for people that hadn't played that bit yet. We wanted to move away from that and allow people to have fun talking about what they'd done.

***Inquisition* is such a large-scale game; how do you focus in on the core elements that will provide a cohesive experience? How do you form this kind of complex game?**

It can be difficult sometimes to get that cohesion with so many ideas coming from so many different people, yes. We have a system that we use to evaluate whether or

not a certain piece of content will make it into the game, though. Everything starts out at a high level initial concept phase that hasn't had a huge amount of work done to it but we do have some sketches and some narrative understanding attached to it. That understanding allows us to decide whether or not it represents a good direction for the game and whether or not it fits alongside other things that we want to do.

Each of those concepts is approved up through the different discipline leads. So the lead world designer would say that they're happy for it to be in the game, then they take it up to the bosses above and get their view on it.

You need to not be afraid to make fixes to existing ideas when new information comes to light, however. One example I remember clearly is that a narrative beat we originally had in the prologue simply had to be moved to a different part of the game. That required a ton of work in going through the repercussions of moving it and evaluating whether it was worth the effort

compared to how much it would affect the overall quality of the game.

How do you keep track of all the smaller details relating to lore and relationships etc? Is there a *Dragon Age* 'Bible' in BioWare HQ?

We do have one. At the end of *Origins* we realised that we had a huge amount of lore. It all made it out into the game, which is a good thing, but we wanted to make sure that if we wanted to do something else that referenced things in the game it was all easily available to us.

What we did was, bafflingly, hire a local crime reporter. He worked for the local newspaper covering the crime beat and was looking to do something else. It happened that he was friends with one of our editors and he explained to us how we would collate half a million words of lore into something easy to digest and search through. Essentially, he built a Wiki that has everything in it and allows us to easily cross-reference anything we want. That has kind of been our Bible.

EXTENDED PLAY

THE WITCHER

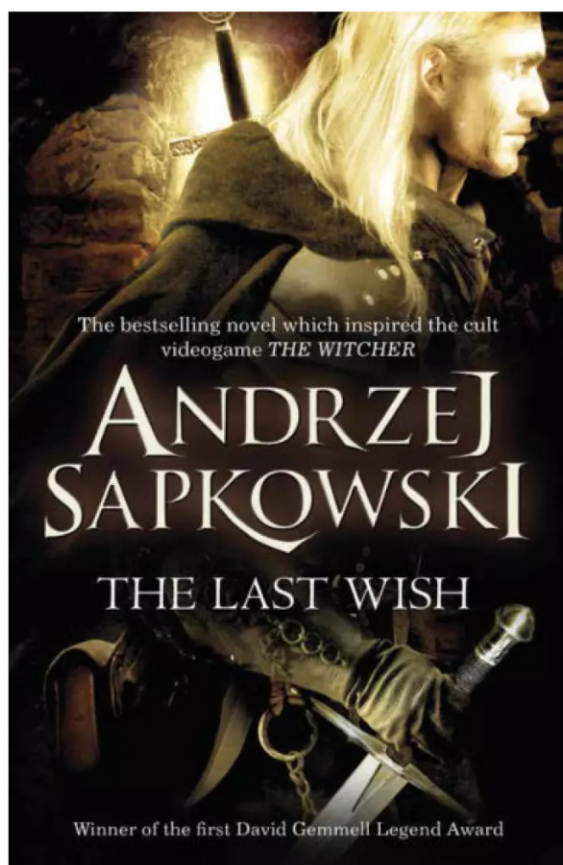
With *Wild Hunt* around the corner and marking the series' PlayStation debut, we thought it might be an idea to get you up to speed on the popular Polish RPG franchise. Here's what we recommend to get ready for Geralt come March...



PLAY THE PREVIOUS GAMES

■ **THE BEST PLACE** to start your *Witcher* education is obviously at the beginning and if you've got a half-decent PC, we recommend you get on it – both the original and the slightly more demanding sequel pop up in sales on both Steam and GOG all the time, meaning you can pick up the pair on the cheap. The original hasn't aged amazingly but it's still playable today and offers decent insight into the origins of Geralt as a character and suggestions of where developer CD Projekt Red wants to take him. A port of the first game, *Rise Of The White Wolf*, was in

the works for PS3 and 360 but development was frozen in early 2009, mere months before it was due to launch. The second game *did* come out on 360, but the PC-centric interface, clumsy controls and hardware that struggled to do the game justice all made the console version an inferior option. With the enhanced power of PS4, we're expecting *Wild Hunt* to look a lot closer to the PC version most people will be able to play – it'll look better on a top-end PC gaming rig, naturally, but good luck finding a console-priced PC that can run the game as well as PS4 will.



READ THE BOOKS

■ **THE GAMES' SOURCE** material has only recently been translated from its original Polish into English, most likely due to the rising interest in the games that the novels spawned. Penned by Polish writer Andrzej Sapkowski, the original book *The Sword Of Destiny* was first released in 1992, a set of short stories that define the lore of the series. Another compendium, *The Last Wish*, followed a year later, before Sapkowski moved onto a series of novels dedicated to Geralt Of Rivia and his many adventures in this incredible fantasy world. Only the first three of six total have so far been translated into English – *Blood Of Elves* was localised in 2008 with follow-ups *Time Of Contempt* and *Baptism Of Fire* only arriving within the last year.



FILL YOUR PHONE WITH SPIN-OFFS

■ **AS WITH ANYTHING** vaguely popular, there have been plenty of mobile device spin-offs to *The Witcher*, although not all that many are still playable today. *The Witcher: Versus* was a cool competitive game where you levelled heroes and monsters by challenging others online, although the servers closed a few years back. This was predated by *The Witcher: Crimson Trail*, a far

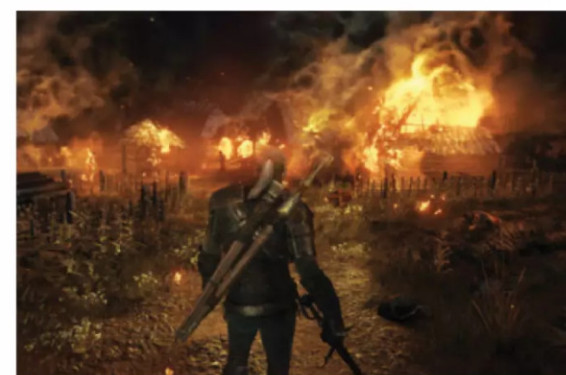
more simplistic side-scrolling brawler for older devices that really makes it clear how far we've come in mobile gaming. Compounding this is *Battle Arena*, a mobile MOBA coming soon to iOS and Android – simpler and quicker than something like *League Of Legends*, it's a gateway to the big scary world of MOBAs just as *Adventure Game* is for daunting board games.



GET THE BOARD GAME

■ **THERE HAVE BEEN** a few physical spin-offs to *The Witcher* in its native country, including a set of pen-and-paper role-playing game system books and a couple of card games. None have made the leap to English, sadly, but help is at hand in the form of *The Witcher Adventure Game* – a traditional board game take on the series co-developed by game studio CD Projekt Red and board game experts Fantasy Flight. Pick one of

four famous faces from the series and roam the lands in search of adventure, levelling up your chosen hero as you go. Early impressions suggest that it might be a little simple for hardcore tabletop gamers, but it's perfectly positioned as a gateway game so that fans of the books and videogames can get into more complex board games a little easier. And that's more than fine with us. Quick game of *Talisman* or *Descent*, anyone?



PRE-ORDER WILD HUNT

■ **CHANCES ARE IF** you're psyched for *The Witcher 3: Wild Hunt*, you've already got your pre-order locked down. If not, the fact that CD Projekt Red has recently come out and said that the already huge game will be supported by no less than 16 free DLC packs over the months following its release at the end of February might just be enough to twist your arm. There's also the rather sexy Collector's Edition up for grabs if you manage to get your order in early enough, the game bundled with a replica game map and medallion, soundtrack CD, steelbook case, beautiful art book and detailed model of Geralt in battle with a Griffin. Bring it on!



EXCLUSIVE ANALYSIS

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THE BLUFFER'S GUIDE TO METAL GEAR SOLID



WHAT IS IT?

■ **THE FIRST GAME** was released on the MSX2 back in 1987, but it wasn't until *Metal Gear* gained its 'Solid' suffix with its first 3D outing that the stealth series really exploded. The concept of besting your enemies using evasion, distraction and careful planning was one that your average console player wasn't familiar with back in 1998 and that made the game stand out. The game is considered one of the best released on PlayStation and as such cemented Hideo Kojima as one of the biggest names in the industry, made protagonist Snake one of videogaming's most iconic characters and spawned a series that includes four mainline games (with the fifth, *The Phantom Pain*, due in 2015) as well as numerous spin-offs.

The game was at the vanguard of a movement that sought to bring a cinematic brand of presentation to the medium. That might not seem unique today, where pretty much every game chases that aesthetic, but it was a revelation at the time. Indeed, the *Metal Gear Solid* series has got a deserved reputation for innovation and has often proved to be ahead of its time when it comes to its tech and gameplay mechanics.

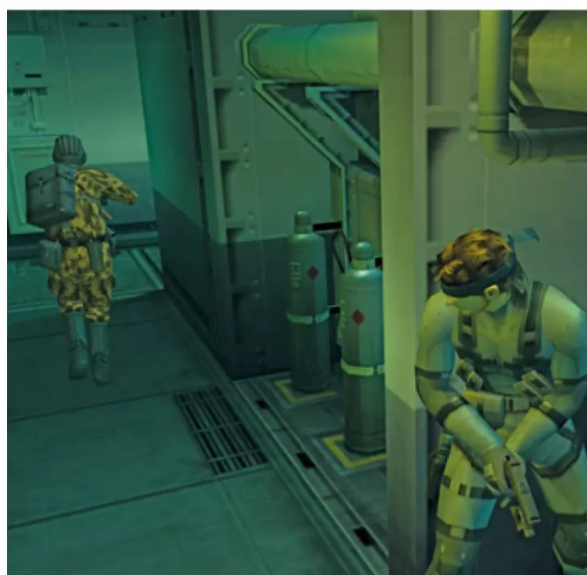


THE STORY SO FAR

■ **SUMMING UP A** narrative that's barely comprehensible to even the most avid *MGS* fan, one that's told with cutscenes up to an hour long, that encompasses nanomachines, a man's mind being taken over by the grafted arm of his former boss (or maybe not), global conspiracies and double crosses is a near impossible task, but let us try.

Big Boss is a legendary soldier who becomes disillusioned with the notion of serving his nation after his mentor, The Boss, is sacrificed in her country's name. He starts his own

band of mercenaries and eventually becomes a 'bad guy' – to grossly simplify things – before being taken out by Snake, the star of *Metal Gear Solid*, during the events of the original *Metal Gear* games. Snake is a product of the Les Enfants Terribles project, which cloned Big Boss while he was in a coma. Snake eventually ends up trying to take down a group called The Patriots who take control of the world's soldiers via their intravenous nanomachines. Got all that? Didn't think so, but don't worry – nobody else understands it, either.



WHERE TO START

■ **THE GOOD NEWS** is that there isn't a bad *Metal Gear Solid* game, so you can't really go wrong when it comes to deciding where to start. In terms of accessibility, *Ground Zeroes* is a good place to begin. Kojima said that the point of the game was to introduce players to new mechanics that'll appear in the upcoming game *The Phantom Pain*, but *Ground Zeroes* also serves as a pretty good introduction to *Metal Gear Solid*'s mechanics in general. Having said that, you won't quite get the full *MGS* experience from *Ground Zeroes*, so if you want something a bit more substantial you've got two choices. The first *MGS* still holds up pretty well and it is easily accessible as a PS Classic on PSN. Alternatively, *MGS 3*, considered the best in the series by many, is set prior to the first two *MGS* games and is the earliest game in the *MGS* timeline, so it gives you a good entry point midway through the series and won't spoil the story of the first two games for you, should you decide to go visit those titles. You can get *MGS 3* as part of the *MGS HD Collection* along with *MGS 2* and *Peace Walker*.



ANY SPIN-OFFS?

■ **PLENTY. THERE HAVE** been a load of handheld games; *Metal Gear Acid*, *Acid 2*, *Portable Ops* and *Peace Walker* for PSP, a Game Boy Colour *Metal Gear Solid* and a handful of mobile games. There's also the PS3 action game starring Raiden, developed by Platinum in collaboration with Kojima Productions, *Metal Gear Rising: Revengeance*. It's superb.



ANYTHING BESIDES GAMES?

■ **THERE ARE A** few bits and pieces, including a novel and a comic book adaptation of the original *Metal Gear Solid*, there is an audio drama that follows on from the first *MGS*. There's also an unofficial fan film called *Metal Gear Solid: Philanthropy*. Kojima has said he's looking forward to the follow up, but it's now been cancelled.



WHO ARE THESE GUYS?



SOLID SNAKE

The protagonist of the original *Metal Gear* games, *MGS*, *MGS 2* (for a bit) and *MGS 4*, Snake is one of the 'Sons of Big Boss', who are the clones of the legendary soldier. As a clone, he suffers from accelerated ageing, hence why he's an old dude in *MGS 4*. His character was based on Snake Plisskin from the 1981 film *Escape From New York*.



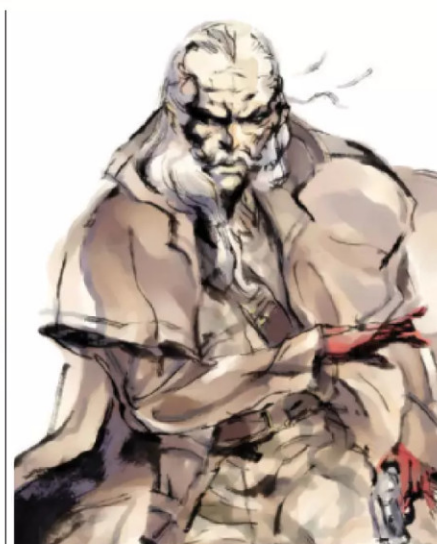
BIG BOSS

The antagonist of the first two *Metal Gear* games and the lead character of *MGS 3*, and the upcoming *MGS V: The Phantom Pain*. He was the protégé of The Boss before going on to form his own mercenary group in order to realise The Boss' dream. An ideological dispute over what that dream was would lead to the events of *MGS 4*.



RAIDEN

Fans were stunned to discover that Snake would only be playable in the introduction of *MGS 2*, before you took on the role of former child soldier Raiden for the remainder of the game. In *MGS 4*, Raiden reappears as a sword-wielding cyborg ninja, as is the case in Raiden's own spinoff game: *Metal Gear Rising: Revengeance*.



REVOLVER OCELOT

Revolver Ocelot, the first boss in *MGS*, initially appears to be nothing but a henchman, but he goes on to be a primary antagonist with motivations and loyalties that are often nebulous. The former Spetsnaz soldier is ostensibly a member of The Patriots, but he ultimately proves himself to be loyal to Big Boss.

TROPHY GUIDE

PS PLUS TROPHY GUIDE



ESCAPE PLAN

PLATFORM: PS4, VITA DIFFICULTY: 3/5

TROPHIES: 13 0 1 3 9

■ **THE PROBLEM WITH** *Escape Plan*'s list is that it's a lot of mental work for one measly Gold Trophy – really, it's only something we can recommend to the most devoted Trophy hunters. As you make your way through the game, there are a few things you should be doing in every stage to work towards certain Trophies. Get killed (Death Comes For Ye), use sheep (Test Subjects), tap warning signs (A Cautionary Tale), trip over objects (Trippin) and kill minions (Splatter Fest) when you can. After that, it's a case of practicing until you can get three stars on each for Starry Night, then hit Challenge mode and aim for fewer than 20 deaths in total. Cheekily, pausing and restarting from the menu during death (but before it reloads) will not count the death, so abuse that if things go wrong.



FROZEN SYNAPSE PRIME

PLATFORM: PS3 DIFFICULTY: 2/5

TROPHIES: 30 1 6 7 16

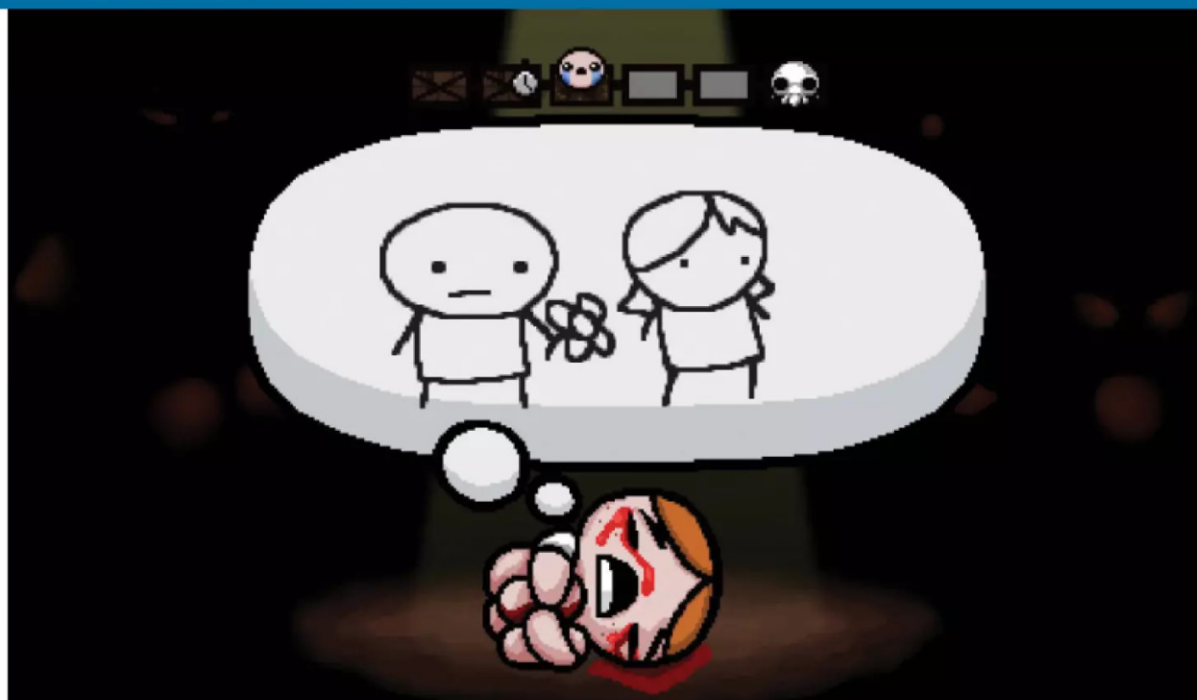
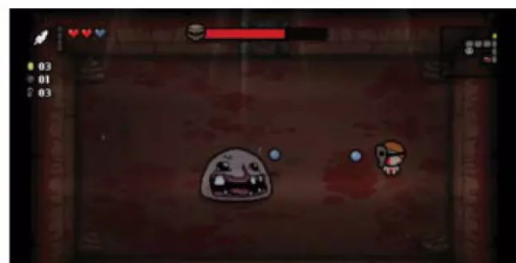
■ **IF YOU'VE GOT** even a vaguely strategic mind, you shouldn't struggle at all with *Frozen Synapse*'s Platinum. With two Trophies up for grabs before the tutorial even ends and most of the campaign ones easy enough to nail during regular play if you keep an eye on the list as you go through, it's only the multiplayer and Skirmish Trophies that will slow the process down. Skirmish is actually a useful resource for some of the more specific tasks on the list, as you can create custom games tailored to allow easy unlocking of otherwise extremely situational Trophies like Splatforms (kill three enemies in one explosion) or Optimal Prime (win in one turn). As for multiplayer, it's just a bit of a grind, especially if you end up waiting on other players to make their moves. Chalk up 100 online kills, one online win, one flawless win and one match in each of the five modes to sew up the online component and bag the Platinum.

THE BINDING OF ISAAC: REBIRTH

PLATFORM: PS4, VITA DIFFICULTY: 5/5

TROPHIES: 59 1 2 2 54

■ **OKAY, WHILE WE** were excited to see that this disturbing dungeon crawl has a Platinum, our hopes were crushed when we saw the list itself. Some of the 54 Bronzes are hard enough and given how random everything is (and how seed codes disable Trophies), it could take months just to have a chance of even seeing everything, let alone doing it. Many Trophies involve beating specific bosses with each character, so go out of your way to unlock them all as soon as possible – each Trophy also unlocks a powerful item that should make future runs easier, if you can find them that is. Oh, and you'll need to finish the entire game with a character who dies in a one hit. Yeah... never going to happen.



THE HUNGRY HORDE

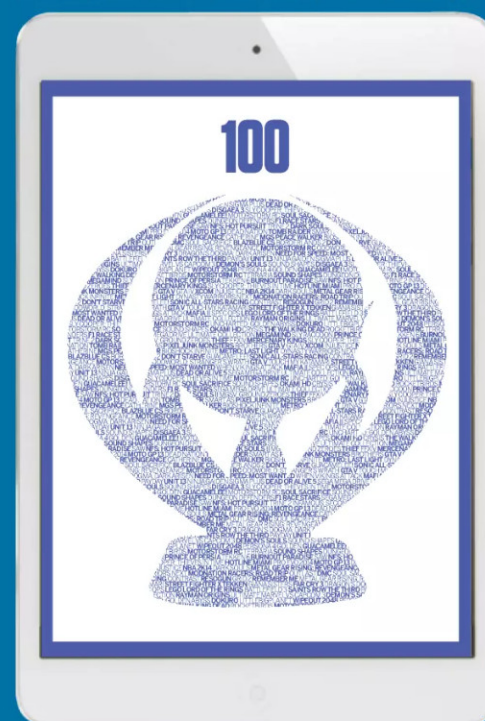
PLATFORM: VITA **DIFFICULTY:** 3/5 **TROPHIES:** 43 🏆 1 🏆 4 🏆 6 🏆 32

■ **AT THE TIME** of writing, several glitched Trophies mean that the Platinum is actually unobtainable, but the devs have promised a patch to remedy this and that should have landed by the time these words reach you. Assuming that's the case, the Platinum isn't nearly as bad as it first appears – a lot of the incidental Trophies will pop on runs where you're learning the ropes while most of the grinding ones (destroy 1,000 flowers,

recruit 10,000 zombies, pass 1,000 checkpoints and so on) rack up a lot faster than you expect, especially once you learn the tricks of the game. By the time you've hit those huge milestones for the grind Trophies, you should easily be good enough to be landing the toughest one-run Trophies, meaning the Platinum should be in sight at that point. It should probably take you 30-40 hours, depending on how quickly you can get good at the game.



MORE TROPHIES



IF THIS COLLECTION of Trophies leaves you wanting even more delicious Platins, you'd do well to check out our 100 Platins digital edition, available for £1.99 through our free app on mobiles and tablets. There's also an in-depth *The Last Of Us* Trophy guide available.

STEAMWORLD DIG

PLATFORM: PS4, VITA **DIFFICULTY:** 3/5

TROPHIES: 14 🏆 0 🏆 1 🏆 1 🏆 12

■ **ANOTHER PLATINUM-FREE** PS Plus freebie, but it's also one of our favourite recent indie titles, so we'll let it off. Around half of the Trophies should unlock naturally as you dig ever-deeper into the unknown, but you'll need to be aware of a few of the trickier ones. Quicker Than A Tumbleweed should be reserved for a second run, as you're never going to finish the game in under two and a half hours before you know the ropes. On that second run, you should be looking to bag all four completion Trophies (no deaths, 20,000+ gold, 150+ orbs and a time under 150 minutes) as the game's lone Gold Trophy is reserved for those expert players that manage to complete all four feats in a single run.



LUFTRAUSERS

PLATFORM: PS3/VITA **DIFFICULTY:** 3/5

TROPHIES: 12 🏆 0 🏆 1 🏆 3 🏆 8

■ **BETWEEN THE TWO** glitched Trophies (Don't Mess With The Rauser and Master Rauser) and the fact that there's no Platinum at the end of the rainbow, *Luftrausers* is pretty much a Trophy hunter's nightmare. It's a shame too, as the game is ace – we've played more than enough to have hit 100 per cent by now if everything worked as it should. The rest are pretty self-explanatory, to be honest, and most should pop over the course of regular play. The only one you'll have to go out of your way to get (besides chasing particular missions to unlock parts) is What Does SMFT Stand For?, which requires you to survive the game's most hardcore mode long enough for the sirens to die out. Good luck – you'll need it, since one nasty random wave spawn can end a run here.

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THE WITCHER 3: WILD HUNT



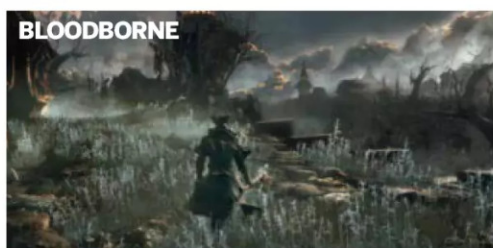
WHY WE'RE LOOKING forward to going hunting in 2015

WWE 2K15



WE GIVE YOU the bottom line

BLOODBORNE



REPORTING BACK ON the alpha

EVOLVE



WE PLAY LEFT 4 Dead's spiritual successor

CALL OF DUTY: ADVANCED WARFARE



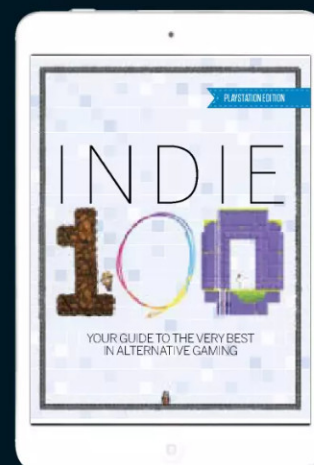
THE MULTIPLAYER PHENOMENON is back

ASSASSIN'S CREED: UNITY



FIND OUT IF it's truly revolutionary

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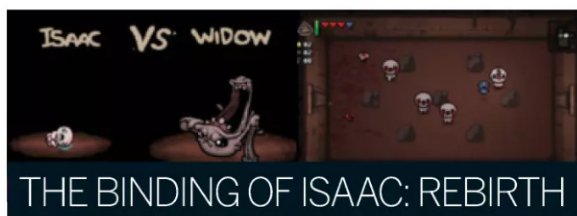
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Join the Play team for live streaming events and shared gameplay

TOURNAMENTS!

Keep an eye on our Facebook and Twitter channels for information on our Twitch tournaments, where you can play videogames with us for the world to watch!

The game changes each time, and the best players will win prizes – free games, or just some of the other tat around our office. Come and join in the fun next time and you could win something neat.



THE BINDING OF ISAAC: REBIRTH

You're going to have to get good at *The Binding Of Isaac* if you want to finish it, because this procedurally generated *Zelda*-like is hard. Come watch us ace it to pick up some tips (or see us fail and make a mental note of what not to do).



GRAND THEFT AUTO V

The PS4 version of *GTA V* is aiming to aid immersion by putting more cars on the road, more people on the streets and more animals in the wild. Join us to have a look at how much of a difference there really is between the two versions.

THE STORIES, STRATEGIES, HEROES & MACHINES

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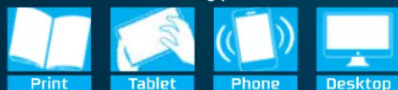


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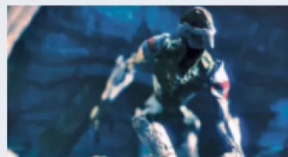


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PLAY+ PLUS PlayList

IF YOU WANT TO KNOW WHAT A GAME SCORED THEN THESE PAGES ARE FOR YOU

TEAM PICKS BEST ONLINE MULTIPLAYER



top five LUKE ALBIGÉS

- 1 Destiny
- 2 FFXIV: A Realm Reborn
- 3 Dark Souls 2
- 4 Borderlands 2
- 5 SoulCalibur V



top five LIAM WARR

- 1 FIFA 15
- 2 Destiny
- 3 Minecraft
- 4 Grand Theft Auto V
- 5 Battlefield 4



top five DREW SLEEP

- 1 Call Of Duty 4: Modern Warfare
- 2 Red Dead Redemption
- 3 The Last Of Us
- 4 Warhawk
- 5 Borderlands 2



top five PAUL WALKER-EMIG

- 1 Call Of Duty: Modern Warfare 2
- 2 Battlefield 4
- 3 FIFA 12
- 4 Payday 2
- 5 The Last Of Us

PS4 LISTING



GAME	ISSUE	SCORE
Assassin's Creed IV: Black Flag	237	83%
Alien: Isolation	249	90%
Battlefield 4	238	80%
Bound By Flame	245	62%
Call Of Duty: Ghosts	238	75%
Child Of Light	244	79%
CounterSpy	248	50%
Daylight	245	20%
Dead Nation: Apocalypse Edition	242	74%
Destiny	249	85%
Diablo III: Reaper Of Souls	248	92%
Disney Infinity 2.0	249	80%
Don't Starve	240	81%
Driveclub	250	77%
Dynasty Warriors 8 XLCE	243	80%
EA Sports UFC	246	75%
The Evil Within	250	84%
Fez	243	95%
FIFA 15	249	85%
Final Fantasy XIV: A Realm Reborn	243	85%
Hohokum	248	80%
inFamous: First Light	249	55%
inFamous: Second Son	242	86%
Killzone Shadow Fall	238	80%
Killzone Shadow Fall: Intercept	246	84%
Knack	238	55%
Lego Marvel Super Heroes	238	85%
Lego The Hobbit	244	65%
Mercenary Kings	244	85%
Metal Gear Solid V: Ground Zeroes	242	85%
Middle-earth: Shadow Of Mordor	250	80%
Murdered: Soul Suspect	246	48%
NBA 2k15	250	84%
Need For Speed Rivals	238	83%
NHL 15	249	63%
Octodad: Dadliest Catch	244	60%
PES2015	250	88%
Plants Vs Zombies: Garden Warfare	248	71%
Outlast	241	73%
Resogun	238	91%
An addictive and accomplished shoot-'em-up, Resogun is an indie delight and a surprise PS4 launch highlight. Awesome stuff.		
Resogun Heroes	247	93%
Rogue Legacy	248	91%
Skylanders Swap Force	238	77%
Skylanders Trap Team	250	79%
Sniper Elite III	246	72%
The Amazing Spider-Man 2	245	25%
The Last Of Us Remastered	247	94%
Thief	241	70%
Tiny Brains	240	68%
Transistor	245	87%
Transformers: Rise Of The Dark Spark	247	30%
Trials Fusion	244	80%
Valiant Hearts	247	64%
War Thunder	239	80%
Watch Dogs	245	80%
Warriors Orochi 3 Ultimate	249	62%
Wolfenstein: The New Order	245	78%

PS3 LISTING



007 Legends	225	44%
194 2: Joint Strike	170	74%
2014 FIFA World Cup Brazil	244	69%
3D Dot Game Heroes	192	87%
50 Cent: Blood On The Sand	177	70%


GAME	ISSUE	SCORE
Ace Combat: Assault Horizon	211	78%
The Adventures Of Tintin	212	58%
Afro Samurai	177	61%
After Burner Climax	193	91%
Agarest: Generations Of War	187	78%
Agarest: Generations Of War 2	223	43%
Agarest: Generations Of War Zero	209	52%
Age Of Booty	172	81%
Air Conflicts: Secret Wars	208	58%
Alice: Madness Returns	207	57%
Alien Breed: Impact	196	80%
Alien Breed 2: Assault	201	82%
Alien Breed 3: Descent	204	61%
Aliens: Colonial Marines	230	45%
Aliens Vs Predator	189	79%
All Zombies Must Die!	214	64%
Alone In The Dark	173	70%
Alpha Protocol	193	83%
Army	215	19%
Anarchy: Rush Hour	194	73%
Ape Escape	208	55%
Aquapazza: Aquaplus Dream Match	239	70%
Aqua Panic	193	68%
Arcana Heart 3	207	79%
Armageddon Riders	207	65%
Armored Core: For Answer	173	65%
Armored Core 4	153	67%
Armored Core V	217	60%
Army Of Two	164	80%
Army Of Two: The 40th Day	188	65%
Army Of Two: The Devil's Cartel	231	44%
Assassin's Creed	161	58%
Assassin's Creed II	186	89%
Assassin's Creed III	225	78%
Assassin's Creed: Brotherhood	199	91%
Assassin's Creed: Revelations	212	75%
Asura's Wrath	216	67%
Atelier Ayesha: The Alchemist Of Dust	230	60%
Atelier Rorona: The Alchemist Of Arland	198	77%
Backbreaker	193	70%
Back To The Future: It's About Time	204	71%
The Baconing	210	72%
Band Hero	187	68%
Batman: Arkham Asylum	183	85%
Batman: Arkham City	211	94%
Batman: Arkham Origins	237	85%
Battle Fantasia	176	67%
Battlefield 1943	182	89%
Battlefield: Bad Company	168	78%
Battlefield: Bad Company 2	190	93%
Battlefield 3	212	88%
Battleship	219	44%
Bayonetta*	187	93%
The Beatles: Rock Band	184	96%
Beat Hazard Ultra	213	79%
Beat Sketcher	201	85%
Beyond Good & Evil HD	207	86%
Beyond: Two Souls	236	70%
Binary Domain	216	70%
Bionic Commando	179	82%
Bionic Commando Rearmed	169	88%
Bionic Commando Rearmed 2	203	61%
BioShock	172	93%
BioShock 2	189	88%
BioShock Infinite	230	97%
Birds Of Steel	217	55%
BlackSite	163	43%
Blade Kitten	197	72%
Bladestorm: The Hundred Years' War	160	58%
Blast Factor	152	72%
BlazBlue: Calamity Trigger	190	85%
BlazBlue: Continuum Shift	198	94%
Blazing Angels	151	54%
Bleach: Soul Resurrección	209	63%
Blitz: The League II	172	67%
Blokus	202	54%
BloodRayne: Betrayal	211	62%
Blur	193	86%


GAME	ISSUE	SCORE
Bodycount	210	54%
Bombberman Ultra	185	82%
Borderlands	185	80%
Borderlands 2	223	90%
Borderlands: The Pre-Sequel	250	69%
The Bourne Conspiracy	168	72%
Braid	188	93%
Brink	206	67%
Brothers: A Tale Of Two Sons	233	83%
Brothers In Arms: Hell's Highway	171	75%
Brütal Legend	185	79%
Bulletstorm	203	86%
The Bureau: XCOM Declassified	235	57%
Burnout Crash	211	79%
Burnout Paradise	162	74%
Burn Zombie Burn	178	85%
Buzz! Quiz TV	168	82%
Buzz! Quiz World	185	70%
Calling All Cars	155	81%
Call Of Duty 3	151	77%
Call Of Duty: World At War	173	68%
Call Of Duty 4: Modern Warfare	160	88%
Call Of Duty: Modern Warfare 2	186	94%
Call Of Duty: Modern Warfare 3	212	88%
Call Of Duty: Black Ops	199	94%
Call Of Duty: Black Ops II	226	80%
Call Of Juarez: Bound In Blood	181	85%
Call Of Juarez: Gunslinger	232	80%
Call Of Juarez: The Cartel	208	30%
Captain America: Super Soldier	208	70%
Castle Crashers	200	88%
Castlevania: Harmony Of Despair	212	67%
Castlevania: Lords Of Shadow	197	85%
Castlevania: Lords Of Shadow 2	241	81%
Carnival Island	213	53%
Catan	195	85%
Cars 2	208	68%
The Cave	230	77%
Catherine	215	61%
Champion Jockey	210	50%
Chronicles Of Riddick: Assault On Dark Athena	178	87%
Child Of Eden	211	80%
Chime Super Deluxe	203	80%
Civilization Revolution	168	90%
Clash Of The Titans	193	65%
Clive Barker's Jericho	159	84%
The Club	163	80%
Colin McRae: DiRT	158	91%
Colin McRae: DiRT 2	184	87%
Command & Conquer: Red Alert 3	178	65%
Commander's Challenge	185	68%
Command & Conquer	175	44%
Comet Crash	186	84%
Comix Zone	210	62%
Conan	160	71%
Condemned 2	165	78%
Costume Quest	199	70%
Conflict: Denied Ops	164	50%
Counter Strike: Global Offensive	223	89%
Crash Commando	174	80%
Crash Time 4: The Syndicate	218	37%
Crazy Machines Elements	210	71%
Create	199	71%
Critter Crunch	188	91%
Cross Edge	182	59%
Crystal Defenders	184	48%
Crysis 2	204	72%
Crysis 3	230	61%
Cubixx HD	207	76%
The Cursed Crusade	211	40%
Damnation	181	38%
Damage Inc: Pacific Squadron WWII	223	37%
Dance Dance Revolution	201	52%
Dante's Inferno	189	80%
Dark Mist	164	53%
The Darkness	154	91%
The Darkness II	215	76%
Dark Sector	165	62%


THIS MONTH'S NEW ENTRIES

The newest games, freshly squeezed among all your old favourites

Driveclub	77%
The Evil Within	84%
NBA 2K15	84%
Borderlands: The Pre-Sequel	69%
PES 2015	88%
Persona 4 Arena Ultimax	92%
Middle-earth: Shadow Of Mordor	80%
Skylanders: Trap Team	79%
Fairy Fencer F	49%

GAME	ISSUE	SCORE
Dark Souls	211	90%
Dark Souls II	242	90%
Darkstalkers Resurrection	230	82%
Dark Void	188	81%
Darksiders	188	83%
Darksiders II	221	86%
DC Universe Online	202	80%
de Blob 2	203	65%
Dead Or Alive 5	223	78%
Dead Island	210	79%
Dead Island: Riptide	231	65%
Dead Rising 2	197	78%
Dead Rising 2: Off The Record	211	61%
Dead Space	172	87%
Dead Space 2	201	92%
Dead Space 3	228	70%
Dead Space: Extraction	203	88%
Dead Space: Ignition	199	47%
Dead To Rights: Retribution	192	68%
Deadly Premonition: The Director's Cut	231	82%
Dead Nation	201	86%
Deadpool	233	60%
DeathSpank	195	83%
Def Jam: Icon	151	79%
Def Jam Rapstar	199	72%
Defiance	231	50%
Demon's Souls	193	92%
Destroy All Humans!: Path Of The Furon	178	29%
Derrick The Deathfin	227	79%
Deus Ex: Human Revolution	209	91%
Devil May Cry 4	163	89%
Devil May Cry HD Collection	217	80%
Diablo III	235	89%
DiRT 3	206	85%
DiRT Showdown	219	84%
Disgaea 3: Absence Of Justice	175	81%
Dishonored	224	92%
Disney Infinity	235	81%
DJ Hero	186	91%
DJ Hero 2	198	88%
Doctor Who: The Eternity Clock	220	32%
Doom 3: BFG Edition	225	69%
Double Dragon Neon	224	37%
DmC Devil May Cry	227	93%
 <p>DmC injects new life into one of the best genres in all of gaming, and does so with a style and confidence that elevates it beyond its roots.</p>		
Dragon Age: Origins	186	82%
Dragon Age II	203	86%
Dragon Ball: Raging Blast	186	40%
Dragon Ball Z: Burst Limit	168	61%
Dragon's Crown	235	87%
Driver: San Francisco	209	68%
Droplitz	184	91%
Duke Nukem Forever	207	33%
D&D: Chronicles Of Mystara	233	80%
Dungeon Siege III	206	80%
Dust 514	233	51%
Dynasty Warriors: Gundam	160	40%
Dynasty Warriors: Gundam 2	176	43%
Dynasty Warriors: Gundam 3	208	56%
Dynasty Warriors: Strikeforce	189	37%
Dynasty Warriors 6	164	30%
Dynasty Warriors 6: Empires	181	44%
Dynasty Warriors 7	204	32%
Dynasty Warriors 7: Empires	230	40%
Dynasty Warriors 8	234	71%
Earthworm Jim HD	196	89%
EA Sports Active 2	200	81%
EA Sports Grand Slam Tennis	215	75%
EA Sports MMA	198	89%
Eat Lead	178	38%
Eat Them!	202	60%
echochrome	169	85%
echochrome II	202	83%
EDF: Insect Armageddon	208	64%
The Elder Scrolls IV: Oblivion	152	91%
The Elder Scrolls V: Skyrim	212	93%

GAME	ISSUE	SCORE
Elfunk	170	45%
El Shaddai: Ascension Of The Metatron	208	77%
Enchanted Arms	152	69%
Enemy Territory: Quake Wars	168	60%
Enslaved: Odyssey To The West	197	83%
Epic Mickey 2: The Power Of Two	226	55%
Eternal Sonata	176	87%
Euforia	212	85%
Everybody's Golf 5	158	88%
Everybody's Golf: World Tour	165	91%
Explodemon	203	70%
Eye Of Judgment	159	65%
EyePet	185	83%
F1 2010	197	86%
F1 2011	211	71%
F1 2012	223	79%
F1 Race Stars	226	61%
FaceBreaker	170	55%
Fairy Fencer F	250	43%
Fallout 3	173	97%
Fallout: New Vegas	198	88%
Family Guy: Back To The Multiverse	227	40%
Fantastic Four: Rise Of The Silver Surfer	155	39%
Far Cry 2	172	74%
Far Cry 3	226	88%
Far Cry 3: Blood Dragon	231	85%
Fat Princess	183	65%
Fatal Inertia EX	168	65%
FEAR	151	81%
FEAR 2: Project Origin	176	87%
FEAR 3	208	60%
FIFA 11	197	91%
FIFA 12	210	86%
FIFA 13	223	82%
FIFA 14	236	90%
FIFA Street (2012)	217	74%
FIFA Street 3	163	66%
Final Fight: Double Impact	193	90%
The Fight	199	42%
Fight Night Champion	203	88%
Fight Night Round 3	151	87%
Fight Night Round 4	181	84%
Final Fantasy XIV: A Realm Reborn	236	81%
Final Fantasy XIII	190	85%
Final Fantasy XIII-2	214	80%
Final Fantasy XIII: Lightning Returns	240	80%
Fist Of The North Star: Ken's Rage	198	51%
Fist Of The North Star: Ken's Rage 2	230	58%
Flight Control HD	198	85%
Flock!	179	70%
Folklore	158	66%
Front Mission Evolved	198	52%
Frogger: Hyper Arcade Edition	221	55%
From Dust	211	82%
Fuel	180	49%
Full Auto 2: Battlegrounds	151	69%
Fuse	232	73%
Game Of Thrones	220	39%
Gatling Gears	207	62%
Genji: Days Of The Blade	151	38%
Ghost Recon Advanced Warfighter 2	157	83%
Ghost Recon Future Soldier	219	60%
Ghostbusters: The Videogame	180	80%
GI Joe	183	22%
The Godfather	151	37%
The Godfather II	178	38%
God Of War III	190	88%
God Of War: Ascension	230	90%
 <p>With brilliantly reworked combat mechanics and stunning graphics, Ascension is a gloriously violent prequel to the series.</p>		
God Of War Collection*	188	93%
God Of War Collection: Volume II	210	70%
The Golden Compass	162	32%
GoldenEye 007: Reloaded	213	63%
Gotham City Imposters	216	78%
Gran Turismo 5	200	85%
Gran Turismo 6	239	83%

GAME	ISSUE	SCORE
Grand Theft Auto IV	166	98%
Grand Theft Auto V	236	97%
 <p>Rockstar's latest is a masterpiece: the perfect swansong for the generation and a wonderful addition to the franchise.</p>		
Greed Corp	191	75%
Green Day: Rock Band	194	77%
Greg Hastings Paintball 2	219	22%
Grid 2	232	79%
Grid Autosport	246	67%
GTI Club+	174	72%
GTA: Episodes From Liberty City	191	94%
Guardians Of Middle-earth	227	71%
Guitar Hero III	160	90%
Guitar Hero 5	184	81%
Guitar Hero: Aerosmith	168	63%
Guitar Hero Greatest Hits	182	76%
Guitar Hero Metallica	179	88%
Guitar Hero: Van Halen	189	65%
Guitar Hero: Warriors Of Rock	197	71%
Guitar Hero World Tour	173	95%
Gundemonium Collection	197	80%
Gunstar Heroes	181	85%
Hamsterball	194	72%
Harry Potter And The Half-Blood Prince	182	60%
Harry Potter And The Order Of The Phoenix	155	32%
Haze	167	64%
Heavenly Sword	157	71%
Heavy Rain	189	94%
Heavy Weapon	187	75%
Heroes Over Europe	184	48%
Hitman: Absolution	225	93%
Hitman: HD Trilogy	230	75%
Homefront	203	69%
The House Of The Dead 4	218	82%
The House Of The Dead: Overkill	212	75%
Hunted: The Demon's Forge	207	59%
Hustle Kings	190	87%
Hyperdimension Neptunia	202	21%
I Am Alive	217	64%
Ico & Shadow Of The Colossus HD	210	94%
IL-2 Sturmovik: Birds Of Prey	183	72%
The Incredible Hulk	168	52%
inFamous	180	81%
inFamous 2	207	83%
Inferno Pool	181	81%
Injustice: Gods Among Us	231	80%
Inversion	220	49%
Invincible Tiger: The Legend Of Han Tao	185	70%
Iron Man	166	58%
Iron Man 2	193	50%
The Jak And Daxter Trilogy	216	82%
Jak And Daxter: The Lost Frontier	187	59%
James Bond 007: Blood Stone	199	63%
James Cameron's Avatar: The Game	187	64%
JASF: Jane's Advanced Strike Fighters	217	30%
JoJo's Bizarre Adventure: All Star Battle	244	80%
Journey	216	87%
Juiced 2: Hot Import Nights	159	78%
Jurassic Park: The Game	194	60%
Just Cause 2	190	87%
Kane & Lynch: Dead Men	160	73%
Kane & Lynch 2: Dog Days	196	71%
Katamari Forever	184	88%
Kick-Ass The Game	194	60%
Killer Is Dead	235	75%
Killzone HD	225	65%
Killzone 2	176	93%
Killzone 3	202	80%
Kingdom Hearts HD 1.5 ReMIX	236	80%
Kingdoms Of Amalur: Reckoning	215	70%
The King Of Fighters XII	182	82%
The King Of Fighters XIII	213	76%
Knights Contract	202	53%
Kung Fu Panda 2	207	20%
Kung Fu Rider	196	65%
Lair	158	52%
Landit Bandit	195	66%

*denotes import review

TOP TEN SUPERHERO GAMES



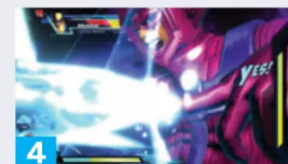
1
Batman: Arkham Asylum



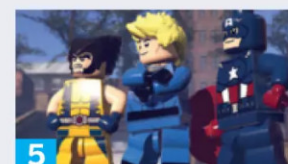
2
Viewtiful Joe



3
Spider-Man 2



4
Marvel Vs Capcom 3



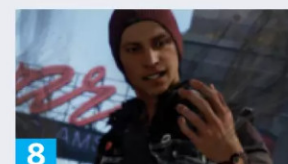
5
Lego Marvel Super Heroes



6
Saints Row IV



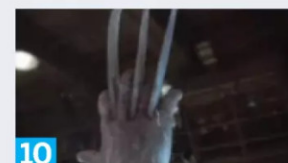
7
Injustice: Gods Among Us



8
inFamous: Second Son



9
The Punisher



10
X-Men Origins: Wolverine

PLAY'S BEST GAMES IF YOU LOVE...



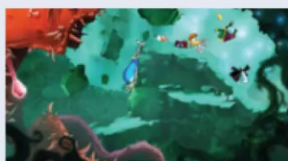
ROBBING THE DECEASED PLAY: TOMB RAIDER

It's a bit light on the whole tomb raiding malarkey and doesn't quite capture all aspects of the original but don't let that distract you from the fact that the *Tomb Raider* reboot is an excellent adventure in its own right.



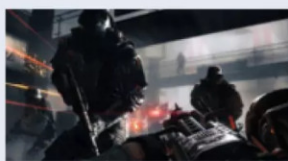
SILHOUETTES PLAY: LIMBO

Moody, atmospheric and bleak, the visually striking *Limbo* is a great little puzzle platformer from the folks over at Playdead. Whether because they're unsettling, brutal, or surprising, the game's got some incredibly memorable moments.



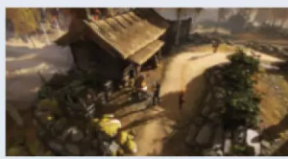
PLATFORMERS PLAY: RAYMAN ORIGINS

If you like platformers and you've not played *Rayman Origins*, or *Rayman Legends*, we can't emphasize just how silly you are. These whimsical, fast-paced platformers are a joy.




BEING SURPRISED PLAY: WOLFENSTEIN: THE NEW ORDER

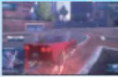

We didn't expect *Wolfenstein: The New Order* to be as good as it was on PS4. It's a shooter with old-school sensibilities wrapped up in a well-written (though dumb) story.




FRESH IDEAS PLAY: BROTHERS: A TALE OF TWO SONS

This is a game in which you control two brothers simultaneously – one on each stick. It's a great idea and one that offers something a bit different to what you usually see.

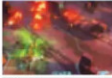
GAME	ISSUE	SCORE
LA Noire	206	91%
Lara Croft And The Guardian Of Light	198	90%
The Last Guy	171	91%
Last Rebellion	191	42%
Lead And Gold: Gangs Of The Wild West	193	65%
Legend Of Spyro: Dawn Of The Dragon	174	54%
Legendary	173	62%
Lego Batman	173	65%
Lego Batman 2	221	80%
Lego Harry Potter: Years 1-4	194	79%
Lego Harry Potter: Years 5-7	213	67%
Lego Indiana Jones: The Original Adventures	167	73%
Lego Indiana Jones 2: The Adventure Continues	187	71%
Lego Pirates Of The Caribbean	206	76%
Lego Rock Band	187	75%
Lego Star Wars: The Complete Saga	160	76%
Lego Star Wars III: The Clone Wars	204	79%
Lego: The Lord Of The Rings	227	85%
Leisure Suit Larry: Box Office Bust	180	24%
Limbo	209	90%
LittleBigPlanet	172	94%
LittleBigPlanet 2	201	96%
LittleBigPlanet: Karting	225	85%
LocoRoco Cocoreccho!	159	80%
Lollipop Chainsaw	221	72%
London 2012	221	45%
The Lord Of The Rings: Aragorn's Quest	199	60%
The Lord Of The Rings: Conquest	175	52%
The Lord Of The Rings: War In The North	213	42%
Lost Planet 2	192	75%
Lost Planet 3	236	58%
Lost Planet: Extreme Condition	163	69%
Lumines Supernova	178	90%
Madagascar 3	224	39%
Madden NFL 12	209	85%
Madden NFL 13	223	86%
Madden NFL Arcade	188	58%
Mad Riders	220	70%
Mafia II	196	81%
MAG	189	68%
Magic: Duels Of The Planeswalker	202	84%
Magic: Duels Of The Planeswalker 2012	208	70%
Majin And The Forsaken Kingdom	199	72%
Marvel Vs Capcom 2	182	90%
Marvel Vs Capcom 3	202	88%
Marvel Ultimate Alliance	151	64%
Marvel Ultimate Alliance 2	185	57%
Max Payne 3	219	77%
Mass Effect 2	201	97%
Mass Effect 3	216	93%
Medal Of Honor	198	86%
Medal Of Honor Airborne	161	85%
Medal Of Honor: Warfighter	225	72%
Mega Man 9	172	75%
Mega Man 10	192	82%
Mercenaries 2: World In Flames	171	78%
Metal Gear Rising: Revengeance	228	91%
 Metal Gear Rising: Revengeance is another world-class entry in gaming's most fundamentally playable genre.		
Metal Gear Solid 4	167	92%
Metal Gear Solid HD Collection	214	91%
Metro: Last Light	231	60%
Michael Jackson: The Experience	205	58%
Microbot	202	51%
Midnight Club: Los Angeles	173	84%
Mindjack	202	38%
Minecraft	240	93%
Mini Ninjas	184	80%
Mirror's Edge	173	71%
MLB: The Show 14	245	90%
ModNation Racers	192	90%
Monkey Island 2: Special Edition	195	94%
Mortal Kombat	205	81%
Mortal Kombat Vs DC Universe	173	68%
MotoGP 10/11	204	64%
MotoGP 13	233	74%
Motorhead	173	60%
MotorStorm	151	92%
MotorStorm: Apocalypse	203	76%
MotorStorm: Pacific Rift	172	93%
Mud: FIM Motocross Championship	217	50%
MX Vs ATV Alive	206	42%
MX Vs ATV Reflex	189	68%
MX Vs ATV Untamed	164	58%
nail'd	201	61%
Namco Museum Essentials	193	60%

GAME	ISSUE	SCORE
Naruto: Ultimate Ninja Storm	174	59%
Naruto Shippuden: UNS Generations	217	53%
Naruto Shippuden: UNS 3	230	85%
Naughty Bear	195	64%
NBA 2K12	211	88%
NBA 2K13	224	88%
NBA Jam	200	68%
NBA Street: Homecourt	151	68%
Need For Speed Carbon	151	76%
Need For Speed: Hot Pursuit	199	91%
Need For Speed: Most Wanted	225	95%
 Need For Speed: Most Wanted is easily the best arcade racer of this generation. We absolutely love it.		
Need For Speed ProStreet	161	86%
Need For Speed Shift	184	81%
Need For Speed: The Run	213	63%
Need For Speed Undercover	173	75%
NeverDead	215	39%
Nier	192	54%
Ni No Kuni: Wrath Of The White Witch	227	85%
NHL 11	198	89%
NHL 12	210	78%
NHL 13	223	74%
NiGHTS Into Dreams...	224	75%
Ninja Gaiden Sigma	154	88%
Ninja Gaiden Sigma 2	184	82%
Ninja Gaiden 3	217	63%
Ninja Gaiden 3: Razor's Edge	231	80%
Noby Noby Boy	177	85%
No More Heroes: Heroes' Paradise	206	89%
Nucleus	155	82%
Okami HD	225	90%
One Piece: Pirate Warriors	224	69%
Operation Flashpoint: Dragon Rising	185	78%
Operation Flashpoint: Red River	205	75%
The Orange Box	161	93%
Outland	207	72%
OutRun Online Arcade	180	80%
Overlord II	181	68%
Pac-Man Championship Edition DX	201	91%
Pain	183	69%
Payday: The Heist	213	88%
Payday 2	235	79%
Peggle	189	94%
Persona 4 Arena	231	91%
 Essential for both <i>Persona</i> fans and fighting game enthusiasts, <i>Persona 4 Arena</i> is an absolute joy to play.		
Persona 4 Arena Ultimax	250	92%
PES 2010	185	72%
PES 2011	197	73%
PES 2012	210	74%
PixelJunk 4am	220	40%
PixelJunk Eden	169	67%
PixelJunk Shooter	187	93%
PixelJunk Shooter 2	204	90%
PixelJunk SideScroller	213	77%
PixelJunk Racers	160	74%
Planet Minigolf	196	58%
PlayStation All-Stars Battle Royale	225	80%
PlayStation Move Heroes	204	54%
Poker Night 2	232	55%
Port Royale 3: Pirates & Merchants	224	54%
Portal 2	205	95%
Prince Of Persia	174	83%
Prince Of Persia: Classic	173	67%
Prince Of Persia: The Forgotten Sands	193	68%
Prince Of Persia Trilogy	200	88%
Prison Break: The Conspiracy	191	40%
Prototype	181	76%
Prototype 2	219	75%
Puddle	216	76%
The Punisher: No Mercy	182	49%
Puppeteer	236	70%
Pure	171	80%
Puzzle Chronicles	194	70%
Puzzle Dimensions	208	81%
Puzzle Quest Galactrix	181	68%
Quantum Conundrum	221	90%
Quantum Of Solace	175	57%
Quantum Theory	197	29%
Race Driver: GRID	167	85%
Ratchet & Clank: Q-Force	227	52%
Rag Doll Kung-Fu: Fists Of Plastic	179	83%
Rage	211	60%
Rainbow Moon	221	68%

GAME	ISSUE	SCORE
Rainbow Six Vegas	155	88%
Rainbow Six Vegas 2	164	78%
Rango	203	54%
Ratchet & Clank: A Crack In Time	186	82%
Ratchet & Clank: All 4 One	211	68%
Ratchet & Clank: Tools Of Destruction	160	72%
Ratchet & Clank Trilogy HD	221	88%
Rayman Legends	235	83%
Rayman Origins	212	80%
Red Dead Redemption	193	92%
Red Faction: Armageddon	207	62%
Red Faction: Guerrilla	180	80%
Remember Me	232	61%
Renegade Ops	211	78%
Resident Evil Chronicles HD Collection	221	82%
Resident Evil Code Veronica X	211	72%
Resident Evil: Operation Raccoon City	217	33%
Resident Evil: Revelations HD	232	71%
Resident Evil 4 HD	210	93%
Resident Evil 5	177	86%
Resident Evil 6	223	88%
Resistance: Fall Of Man	151	83%
Resistance 2	173	90%
Resistance 3	210	88%
Resonance Of Fate	191	79%
Retro City Rampage	228	78%
Ridge Racer 7	151	75%
Ridge Racer Unbounded	217	67%
Riff: Everyday Shooter	162	86%
Rise Of The Argonauts	176	58%
Risen 2: Dark Waters	222	58%
Risen 3: Titan Lords	248	25%
Risk: Factions	202	80%
Rock Band Blitz	223	80%
Rock Band	169	94%
Rock Band 2	179	96%
Rock Band 3	199	84%
Rocksmith	223	78%
Rogue Warrior	188	09%
Rugby World Cup 2011	209	49%
Rune Factory Oceans	220	51%
RUSE	197	82%
The Saboteur	187	67%
Sacred 2: Fallen Angel	180	76%
Sacred 3	247	60%
Saints Row 2	172	79%
Saints Row: The Third	211	88%
SBK Generations	220	51%
Saint Seiya: Sanctuary Battle	216	52%
Sam & Max: The Devil's Playground Ep1	194	90%
Sam & Max: The Devil's Playground Ep2	194	92%
Savage Moon	175	87%
Saw	186	52%
Saw II: Flesh & Blood	198	36%
Scott Pilgrim Vs The World	197	77%
The Secret Of Monkey Island SE	195	92%
Sega Rally Online Arcade	208	74%
Sega Mega Drive Ultimate Collection	177	85%
Section 8: Prejudice	209	80%
SBK 2011	206	70%
SBK Generations	220	54%
SBK X: Superbike World Championship	193	67%
Sega Rally	158	92%
Sengoku Basara: Samurai Heroes	198	76%
Shadows Of The Damned	207	79%
Shank	197	86%
Shatter	183	91%
Shaun White Skateboarding	198	70%
Shaun White Snowboarding	173	72%
Shellshock 2: Blood Trails	177	32%
Shift 2: Unleashed	204	66%
The Shoot	199	76%
Shoot Many Robots	217	81%
Silent Hill: Downpour	217	81%
Silent Hill HD Collection	217	76%
Silent Hill: Homecoming	174	64%
The Simpsons Arcade Game	216	54%
The Simpsons Game	160	82%
The Sims 3	199	87%
The Sims 3: Pets	212	70%
SingStar	159	80%
Singularity	195	80%
Siren Blood Curse	170	62%
Skate	159	86%
Skate 2	175	82%
Skate 3	192	86%
Skullgirls	218	88%

GAME	ISSUE	SCORE
Sleeping Dogs	222	80%
The Sly Collection	200	84%
Sly Cooper: Thieves In Time	230	60%
Sniper Elite V2	218	52%
Sniper: Ghost Warrior	206	45%
Sniper: Ghost Warrior 2	230	55%
SOCOM: Special Forces	205	63%
Sonic Adventure	198	63%
Sonic Adventure 2	225	69%
Sonic CD	214	82%
Sonic The Hedgehog 4: Episode 1	199	82%
Sonic The Hedgehog 4: Episode 2	225	40%
Sonic & Sega All-Stars Racing	190	78%
Sonic & All-Stars Racing Transformed	227	88%
Sonic Generations	212	70%
Sonic The Hedgehog	151	52%
Sonic Unleashed	175	48%
Sorcery	219	76%
SoulCalibur IV	169	94%
SoulCalibur V	214	80%
South Park: The Stick of Truth	242	81%
Spec Ops: The Line	220	59%
Spider-Man 3	155	33%
Spider-Man: Edge Of Time	212	38%
Spider-Man: Shattered Dimensions	197	69%
Spider-Man: Web Of Shadows	173	55%
Spin Jam	174	32%
Splatterhouse	200	58%
Splinter Cell Double Agent	153	79%
Split/Second: Velocity	192	90%
Sports Champions	196	83%
Sports Champions 2	225	65%
SSX	216	45%
Stacking	203	88%
Starhawk	219	81%
Star Ocean: The Last Hope International	190	63%
Star Trek	231	52%
Star Trek: D-A-C	189	57%
Star Wars: The Force Unleashed	171	65%
Star Wars: The Force Unleashed II	199	61%
Star Wars: Pinball	230	79%
Start The Party!	196	72%
Stormrise	178	51%
Stranglehold	159	65%
Street Fighter III: 3rd Strike Online Edition	209	92%
Street Fighter IV	176	95%
Street Fighter X Tekken	217	83%
Strength Of The Sword 3	234	81%
Strider	242	62%
Super Puzzle Fighter II HD Turbo Remix	168	78%
Super Rub-A-Dub	151	83%
Super Street Fighter IV: Arcade Edition	207	88%
Stuntman: Ignition	157	82%
Super Stardust HD	155	74%
Superstars V8: Next Challenge	190	55%
Superstars V8 Racing	181	63%
Super Street Fighter II Turbo HD Remix	176	72%
Super Street Fighter IV	191	90%
Supremacy MMA	211	40%
Switchball	191	75%
Swords And Soldiers	199	88%
Syndicate	216	78%
Tales Of Graces f	222	77%
Tales Of Monkey Island	196	91%
Tales Of Xillia	234	70%
Tales Of Xillia 2	249	71%
Tekken 5: Dark Resurrection Online	161	87%
Tekken 6	184	94%
Tekken Tag Tournament 2	223	90%
Test Drive Ferrari Racing Legends	221	60%
Tetris	202	84%
Test Drive Unlimited 2	203	62%
The Amazing Spider-Man	221	61%
The Last Of Us	233	94%
 <p>When <i>The Last Of Us</i> is good (winter), it's better than anything else this gen – we do not say that lightly.</p>		
The Last Of Us: Left Behind	242	81%
The Testament Of Sherlock Holmes	224	55%
The Walking Dead	231	92%
The Walking Dead: Survival Instinct	231	20%
Thor: God Of Thunder	206	38%
Tiger Woods PGA Tour 14	231	61%
Time Crisis 4	166	69%
Time Crisis: Razing Storm	199	58%
TimeShift	162	72%
TMNT: Turtles In Time-Re-shelled	186	57%

GAME	ISSUE	SCORE
TNA Impact!	171	71%
Tokyo Jungle	223	81%
Tom Clancy's EndWar	173	80%
Tom Clancy's HAWX	177	75%
Tom Clancy's HAWX 2	196	69%
Tom Clancy's Splinter Cell Blacklist	235	71%
Tom Clancy's Splinter Cell Trilogy HD	210	78%
Tomb Raider	229	90%
Tomb Raider Trilogy	204	86%
Tomb Raider: Underworld	173	83%
Tony Hawk's Project 8	151	85%
Tony Hawk's Pro Skater HD	223	73%
Tony Hawk's Proving Ground	160	72%
Tony Hawk: Ride	188	52%
Top Darts	202	71%
Top Gun	198	53%
Top Gun: Hard Lock	218	45%
Top Spin 3	168	71%
Top Spin 4	203	60%
Topotai: Spinning Through Worlds	183	61%
Toy Story 3	195	82%
Transformers: Dark Of The Moon	208	64%
Transformers: Fall Of Cybertron	223	73%
Transformers: War For Cybertron	194	80%
Trash Panic	181	79%
Trials Of Topa	159	50%
Trine	184	85%
Trinity: Souls Of Zill O'll	202	56%
Trinity Universe	194	61%
Tron Evolution	200	17%
Tumble	198	70%
Turning Point: Fall Of Liberty	165	40%
Turok	163	46%
Twisted Metal	216	68%
Two Worlds II	203	64%
UFC Undisputed 2009	180	90%
UFC Undisputed 2010	193	88%
UFC Undisputed 3	215	82%
Ultimate Marvel Vs Capcom 3	212	78%
Ultra Street Fighter IV	246	85%
Uncharted: Drake's Fortune	161	87%
Uncharted 2: Among Thieves	185	96%
Uncharted 3: Drake's Deception	212	90%
Under Siege	207	71%
Unearthed: Trail Of Ibn Battuta: Ep1	233	05%
The Unfinished Swan	225	78%
Unreal Tournament III	162	88%
Untold Legends: Dark Kingdom	151	54%
Valkyria Chronicles	173	82%
Vancouver 2010	189	76%
Vanquish	197	93%
Viking: Battle For Asgard	165	74%
Virtua Fighter 5	151	83%
Virtua Fighter 5: Final Showdown	220	90%
Virtua Tennis 3	150	91%
Virtua Tennis 4	205	79%
Wakeboarding HD	195	65%
The Walking Dead: All That Remains	240	89%
The Walking Dead: 400 Days	234	83%
Wanted: Weapons Of Fate	179	63%
Warhammer 40,000: Space Marine	210	51%
Warhawk	157	84%
Warriors: Legends Of Troy	202	14%
Warriors Orochi 3	217	59%
Watchmen: The End Is Nigh	183	55%
Way Of The Samurai 3	190	16%
Wet	184	41%
Wheelman	178	72%
Where The Wild Things Are	188	56%
White Knight Chronicles	190	55%
White Knight Chronicles II	207	49%
Who Wants To Be A Millionaire?	214	79%
WipeOut HD	172	84%
Wizorb	222	78%
Wolfenstein	183	72%
Wonderbook: Book Of Spells	226	80%
Worms Collection	224	85%
Worms 2: Armageddon	198	87%
Worms Ultimate Mayhem	217	80%
WRC: FIA World Rally Championship	197	76%
WRC 2: FIA World Rally Championship	211	63%
WRC 3 FIA World Rally Championship	225	75%
WSC Real II	204	69%
WWE All Stars	204	82%
WWE Legends Of WrestleMania	178	80%
WWE SmackDown Vs Raw 2011	199	63%
WWE 12	212	50%

GAME	ISSUE	SCORE
WWE 13	225	55%
X-Blades	178	54%
XCOM: Enemy Unknown	224	94%
 <p>Thinking, planning, failing and dying is back in fashion: <i>XCOM</i> is a phenomenal reimagining of a classic title and an instant classic in its own right.</p>		
X-Men Arcade	203	60%
X-Men Destiny	211	35%
X-Men Origins: Wolverine	179	71%
Yaiba: Ninja Gaiden Z	242	35%
Yakuza: Dead Souls	216	60%
Yakuza 3	191	80%
Yakuza 4	203	79%
Zen Pinball 2	224	90%
Zombie Apocalypse: Never Die Alone	213	69%
Zone Of The Enders HD Collection	226	81%
Zuma	182	78%

PS VITA LISTING

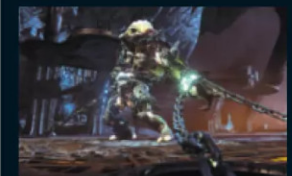


GAME	ISSUE	SCORE
A-Men	217	70%
Army Corps Of Hell	217	64%
Assassin's Creed III: Liberation	225	76%
Atelier Meruru: The Apprentice Of Arland	221	35%
Everybody's Golf	215	86%
BlazBlue: Continuum Shift Extend	216	85%
Call Of Duty: Black Ops Declassified	227	18%
Danganronpa: Trigger Happy Havoc	242	85%
Danganronpa 2: Goodbye Despair	249	89%
Dead Nation	201	86%
Destiny Of Spirits	244	76%
Dokuro	230	71%
Earth Defense Force 2017 Portable	230	82%
Escape Plan	216	81%
FIFA Football	216	80%
fiOw	151	90%
Flower	176	85%
Gravity Crash	187	85%
Gravity Rush	219	86%
Hotline Miami	233	85%
Hustle Kings	216	81%
Joe Danger	194	96%
Killzone: Mercenary	236	88%
LittleBigPlanet	223	93%
Little Deviants	215	69%
Lumines Electric Symphony	216	85%
MGS HD Collection	221	70%
ModNation Racers: Road Trip	215	59%
Mortal Kombat	219	83%
MotorStorm RC	217	81%
Muramasa Rebirth	234	80%
New Little King's Story	224	70%
Ninja Gaiden Sigma Plus	217	72%
Ninja Gaiden Sigma 2 Plus	230	60%
Ninjab: Stranger's Wrath HD	214	86%
Orgarhythm	230	55%
PlayStation All-Stars Battle Royale	225	80%
Persona 4 Golden	228	94%
PixelJunk Monsters	163	94%
Puddle	222	82%
Rayman Origins	216	84%
Reality Fighters	215	52%
Resistance: Burning Skies	219	54%
Ridge Racer	216	48%
Rocketbirds: Hardboiled Chicken	212	82%
Silent Hill: Book Of Memories	225	32%
Sorcery Saga: Curse of the Great Curry God	240	70%
Soul Sacrifice	232	85%
Sound Shapes	223	88%
Superfrog HD	234	41%
Super Monkey Ball: Banana Splitz	224	78%
Sumoni: Demon Arts	230	46%
Super Stardust Delta	216	84%
Tearaway	239	80%
Terraria	232	85%
Touch My Katamari	216	83%
Toukiden: The Age Of Demons	241	86%
Ultimate Marvel vs Capcom 3	216	80%
Uncharted: Fight For Fortune	227	83%
Uncharted: Golden Abyss	215	83%
Unit 13	216	67%
Velocity Ultra	233	80%
Virtua Tennis 4: World Tour Edition	215	81%
Virtue's Last Reward	227	84%
WipeOut 2048	215	87%

*denotes import review

PLAYING THE PLAYLIST

Watch out! Games!



WHAT
(have they been playing?)

Destiny

WHY (was it chosen?)
My name's Luke, and I'm an addict

LUKE ALBIGÉS

I'VE PUT QUITE a lot of time into other games as well this month, most notably the wonderful PS4 version of *GTA V*. But every day I'm away from *Destiny*, I worry about what easy Bounties I'm missing and what Daily missions I'm not getting rewarded for doing. In the end-game, this is the most reliable way to guarantee a flow of Ascendant materials to improve the best gear, and with the expansion about to hit, I want my vault to be full of the stuff. That, and I don't like the idea that the Cryptarch is giving my Legendary shit away to other people. He's the kind of troll that'd do that...



WHAT
(have they been playing?)

PES 2015

WHY (was it chosen?)
It's this year's best footy game

PAUL WALKER-EMIG

I'M DELIGHTED THAT *PES 2015* turned out to be great this year, because there are few things I love more than starting a brand new Master League with that team of nobodies and gradually bringing in the players I need to rise to the top of European football. That's something I'm in the early stages of doing right now with my favourite team, North London, but I'm also looking forward to getting stuck into the game's online modes and trying out *PES 2015*'s new Ultimate Team rip-off, MyClub.



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THE PS4'S SHOWPIECE THE ORDER: 1886

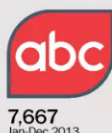
We take a look at the graphical powerhouse that is Sony's huge PS4 exclusive, The Order: 1886.

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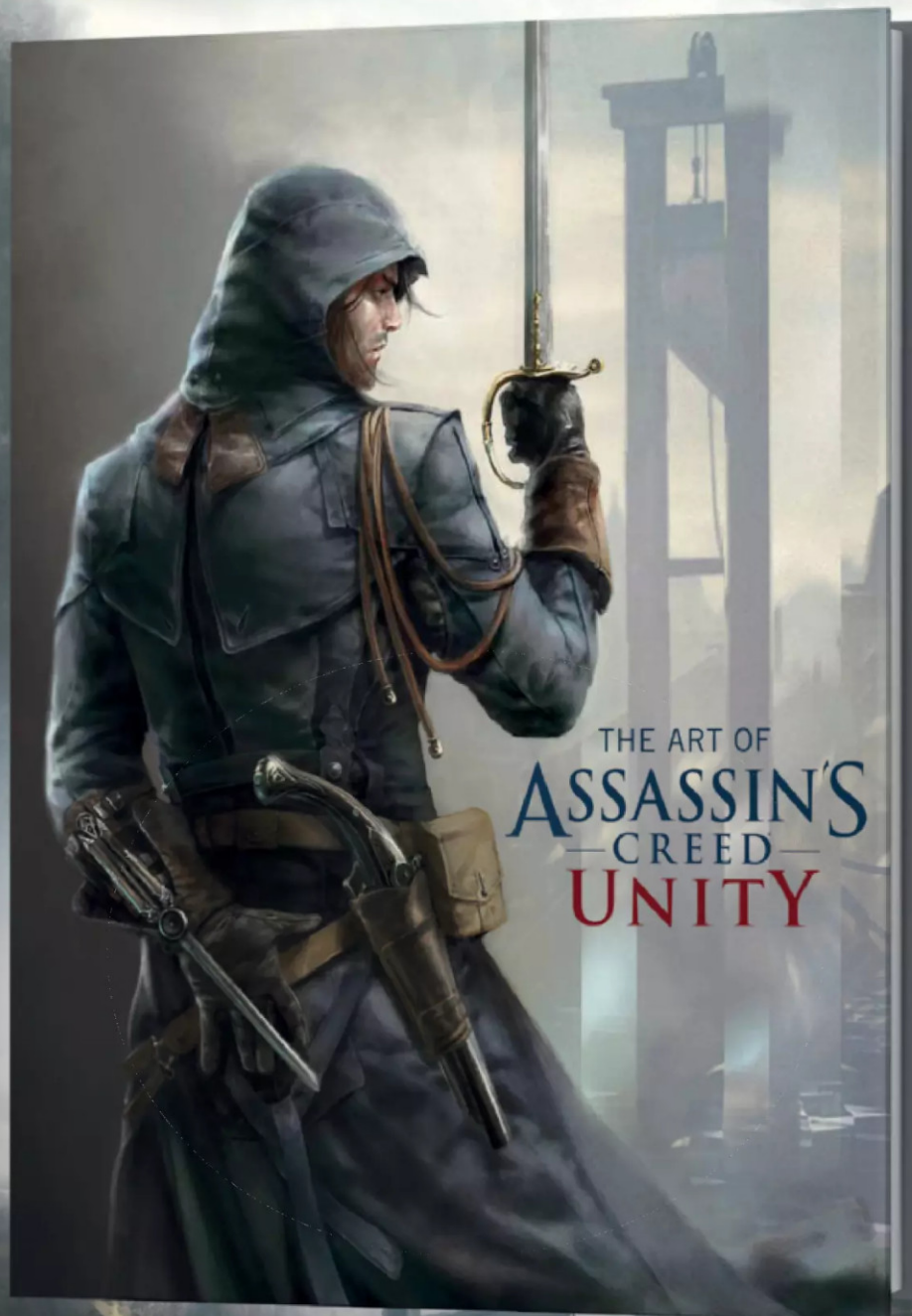


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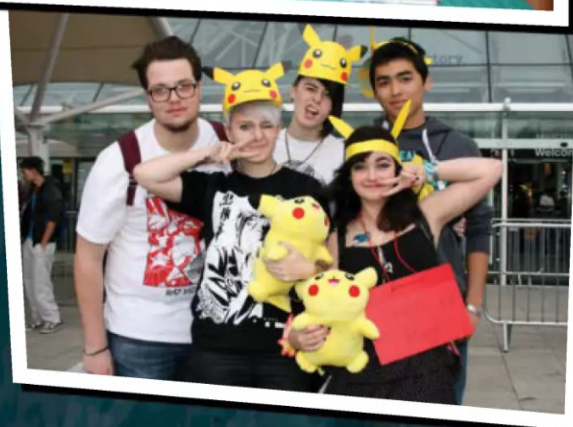
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